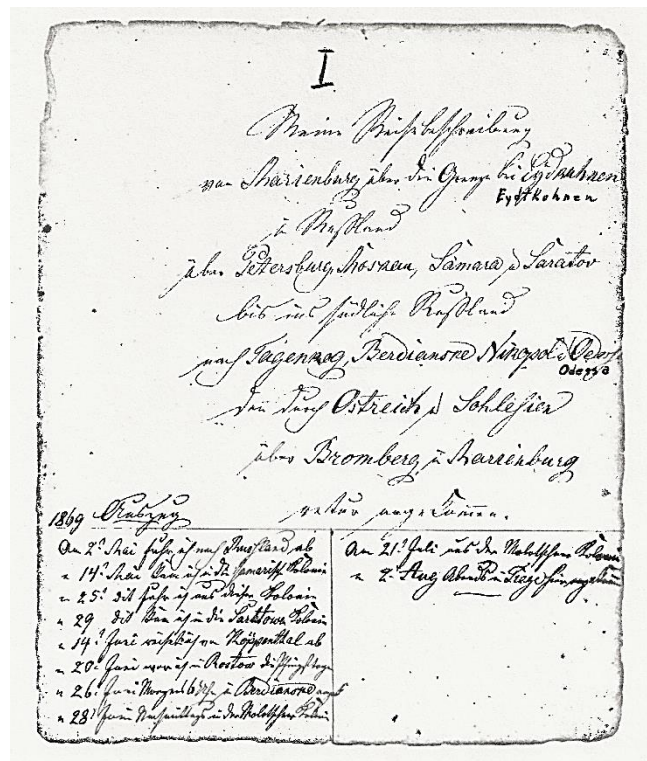


Peter Dyck Travel Diaries: Russia (1869, 1870), Migration to America (1876); & Assorted Letters (1876-1884)



Agathe (Regier, Entz) Dyck and Peter Dyck; the 1869 original cover Peter Dyck, of Tiege, West Prussia, a pastor in the Ladekopp congregation, a pastor in the Emmaus congregation of Whitewater, Kansas, and the founding elder of the Zion Mennonite Church of Elbing, Kansas, wrote three travel diaries about the prelude to settlement in America. This work presents a complete translation into English by John M. Janzen of the diaries. It also includes assorted letters (1876-1884) from family members newly settled in America to those still in Prussia. Louis A. Janzen studied and translated these letters into English and offers editorial comments.



The diary of 1869 (pp. 4-18) describes travel in a big circle in Western Russia, from West Prussia to Petersburg and Moscow, the capitals of Imperial Russia; to the Mennonite colonies Alexandertal and Am Trakt on the Volga River near Samara; from there to the Black Sea coast and the Mennonite colonies of Molotschna and Chortitza along the Dnieper River; the return through Austria-Hungary.

The diary of 1870 (pp. 19-40) records the trip made by Dyck with fellow pastor Wilhelm Ewert deputized to seek out sites for resettlement by Prussian Mennonites; they return to the main colonies Molotschna and Chortitza and surrounding regions; they undertake a lengthy adventuresome trip to the Caucasus region, visiting some dissident Mennonites; finally, benefiting from counsel of well-connected Mennonites and other advisers in Berdjansk and Odessa, they submit a petition to the government agency in charge of foreign colonists.

The diary of 1876 (pp. 41-58) is about leaving Prussia for America; the painful leave-taking, the rail and sail-steam ship Atlantic crossing on the S.S. Rhein, arriving in New York, being whisked through customs and travel arrangements the same day, and more rail travel to Mt. Pleasant Iowa where old friend Cornelius Jansen and the Atchinson, Topeka, & Santa Fe railroad agent C.B. Schmidt arrange temporary housing. From there Dyck and others embark on more land searches in Nebraska and Kansas until Dyck finally finds a 320-acre farm 5 miles south of Peabody, Kansas. This diary explains and exposes many features of our family history that have been mysterious or missing till now. Nine themes caught my attention:

1. These were great-great-grandfather Peter Dyck's only diaries (although he left 123 sermons, some letters, and business papers). These diaries stand out as gems of observation, adventure, a questing spirit, and devotion to family, faith, and farming. But they have a **singular purpose**: to document the search for a new home to continue living as non-resistant Anabaptist-Mennonites in the face of rising and repressive Prussian militarism, in particular, the conscription of his two teen-age sons Peter and Johannes. But along the way they offer a fascinating glimpse of life in the 19th century. Who was the audience to whom he was writing? Maybe just posterity. Possibly they served him as an aide-memoire, of the details of the journeys and the myriads of personal contacts who might be relevant in future endeavors.
2. The **manuscript source** for this translation was a xerox copy of a hand-copy, in old German script, by Grandmother Agathe Regier Janzen, of the old German script original by her grandfather Peter Dyck. Her reasons for needing to hand copy the original are not clear; perhaps the original was in fragile condition. Scans of this copy—she called it *Abschreibung*—were entered by my nephew Mark Janzen Jr. into the translation software Transkribus to produce a Latin script German narrative. This was largely legible although there were some words that needed to be deciphered against the handwritten source. The above image is from Peter Dyck's cover page of the first diary, obtained from the Mennonite Brethren Archive in Winnipeg. The archivist wrote that they had received a digital copy of the diaries in 2005 from a source unknown, or rather, still a mystery.
3. **Networks of kin and acquaintances** abound in sections of the diaries, especially in the Mennonite colonies, with accounts of visits with coffee, a meal, conversation, and/or overnight stay; identification of hosts or contacts in terms of Prussian place of origin and perhaps colony of resettlement; usually followed by a string of kin relationships (as in the "Mennonite game"), situating the named individual in relation to the speaker or next of kin, sometimes offering a character-defining anecdote. This is the feature of the diaries that would least appeal to a reader outside the Mennonite World, but perhaps most interesting to genealogists and old-style social anthropologists.
4. The details of **international travel** in the 3rd quarter of the 19th century, or early industrial revolution. These travelers benefit from steam power, and iron (e.g., railroad tracks, buggy and carriage springs, grain harvesting machines, metal ships), but with continuing older technology (scythes alongside reaper; horsepower; auxiliary sails on the S.S. Rhein).
5. As an **agricultural entrepreneur**, Peter Dyck is interested in the latest **innovations**; but he is also a careful observer and judge of the fertility of the soil in his travels, the vegetation of nature, and the human-tended fields and crops. Although he occasionally notes the beauty of the landscape, most often his comments are biased in favor of an agricultural initiative.

Black soil, thick grass, a variety of trees, are all indications that a farmer like himself could do well there.

6. **Geopolitics of the moment:** reading these travel diaries is like going into a foreign land or another distant century. There are visible traces across the Russian Empire of ethnic minorities having been recently conquered or assimilated, colonists having settled; all this against the backdrop of government reforms like the freeing of indentured serfs and the erosion of the old nobility; The rise of Prussia, the Franco-Prussian war breaking out as he is traveling; Austro-Hungary as another power with its currency; in a few passages Dyck shows awareness of the impact of the liberation of serfs, now underpaid workers, and the injustice toward Mennonite landless by the big estate owners. Yet he doesn't seem to anticipate the looming earthquake of 1917 and the end of the Czarist empire. In America he participates in land searches including Indian reservations, yet he does not express outrage at Indian removals.
7. **Old world or new world?** Russia or America? Initially favoring resettlement to Russia to join relatives and other Mennonites, Peter Dyck is then persuaded to consider America. He mentions the names and visits with Ameworica advocates, among the Mennonite elite, but he is not very vocal about the rationales for the one or the other destination. By the time of his family's emigration in 1876, most of the names of prominent figures in Russia in 1870, are resettled in the Great Plains of North America, and are again named as the main contacts for the land search: Cornelius Jansen, C. B. Schmidt, Bernard Warkentine, the Sudermann brothers Leonard and Abraham; Dietrich Gaeddert, Christian E. Krehbiel.
8. **Peter Dyck the pastor,** a much-sought speaker in congregations in Russia, wherever he visited; on the ship traversing the Atlantic; in newly arrived staging settings, and newly established communities meeting in barns. His diary is regularly enriched with prayer-like phrases asking the divine for protection and thanking the same for having brought them safely to their destination. He observes situations that alarms him, and those that please him, that bring glory to God. He is very much the shepherd of a flock that includes not only his family, but the wider movement seeking a better life where they may faithfully live their convictions.
9. The **assorted letters (1876-1884)** in two parts (the first by Agatha Regier Entz Dyck and her children—pp. 58-76), the second by Peter Dyck—pp. 77-98)--, his wife, translated and briefly introduced by Louis Janzen, offer a sampling of the rigors of frontier life: finding a place to live; daily life on farms; family and community life, birthdays, funerals, weddings; prairie fires and grasshoppers; the tragedies of death in childbirth, the drowning in 1878 of the Dyck's two sons Peter Jr. and Johannes; the appearance of a farm manager in the person of Herman Janzen, who then marries daughter Anna Entz; Peter Sr.'s 1881 trip to Prussia and Russia.

John M. Janzen

October 3, 2024

Grandfather Peter Dyck's Russia trip in the year 1869

Copy by Agathe Regier Janzen

My 1869 travel diary of the trip from Marienburg to the Russian border at Eydtkuhnen,¹ to Petersburg, Moscow, Samara and Saratov; on to southern Russia: Taganrog, Berdiansk, Nikopol, Odessa; then through Austria-Hungary and Schlesien via Bromberg to Marienburg.

We departed on May 2, 1869 from Marienburg at 10:00 p.m., I, Peter Dyck, of Tiege, with four young men—Johannes Andres of Nogathau, Johannes Goosen of Irgang, Jakob Regier of Herrenhagen, and Jakob Wiebe of Lesewitz. The last three individuals had traveled ahead three days earlier to handle *contons revision* (baggage shipping?).

We travelled by railroad² and reached the border without difficulty at 7:00 am the next day. We dealt with the Russian border inspections, which went very well. We drank coffee with a bit of bread that cost 90 kopeks for four people. I note also that we were joined in our group by a man with the name Strauss, his wife, and two children that were emigrating to Samara. These working people had their luggage along and had inadvertently packed their coffee in the checked bags. So until they reached Petersburg they could not benefit from their own coffee -- they did enjoy coffee, thanks to our generosity.



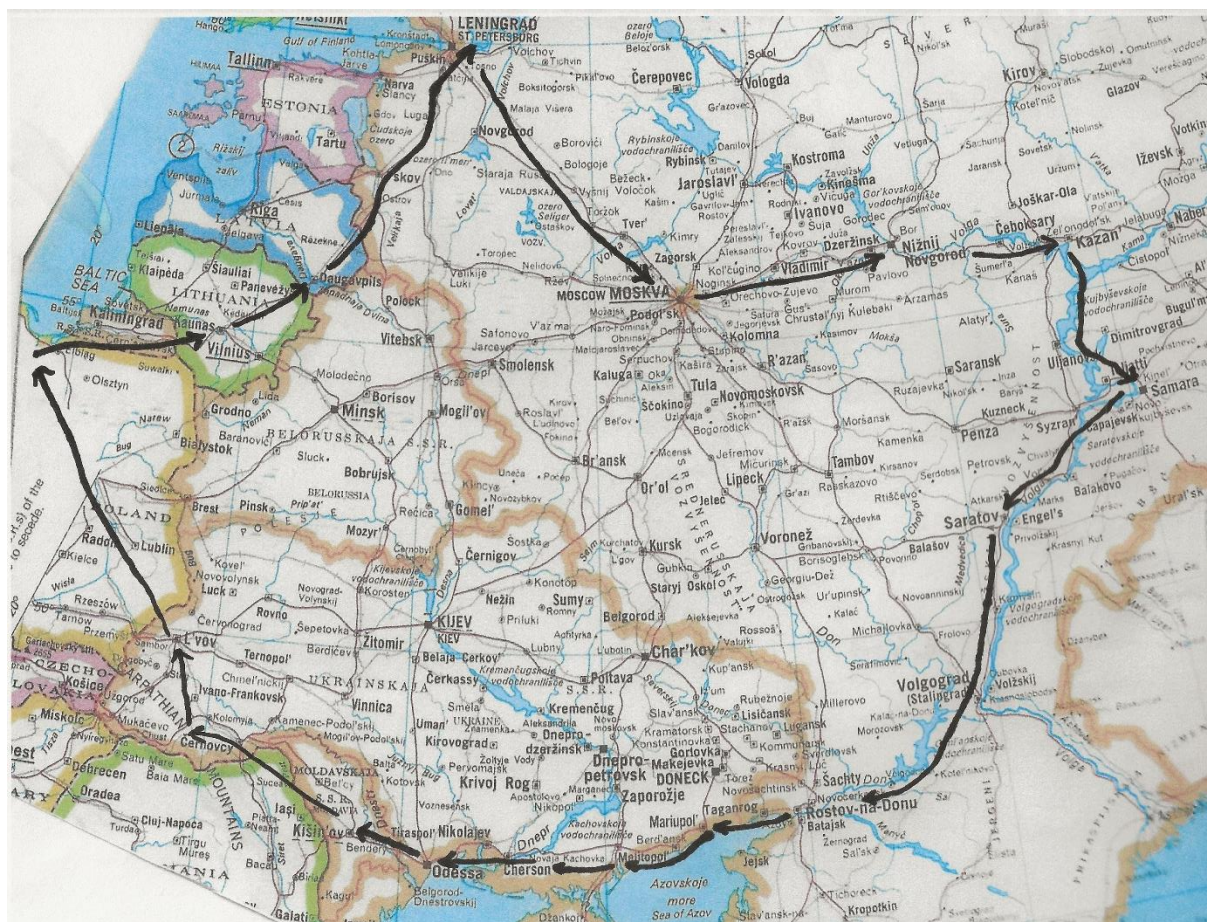
And so, with God's name in our minds, (at Eydtkuhnen) we entered the vast empire at 9:00 am after two hours wait. The landscape in Russia is at first barren and less inhabited than in Prussia; it is not as fertile. This picture continued most of the way to Petersburg. Eventually the picture improves and one sees furrows of plows and crops, as well as pastures that could yield something. Otherwise, we saw immense forests of soft wood. But through Poland and a distance into Russia all trees had been cut and burned down to the roots for 60 rods (*Ruthen*, 16') alongside the track. This was the work of Russian security to protect the railroads from Polish insurgents.

We reached the Niemen River at Kowaa, and at the station just before Vilna (Lithuania) we cross the Leahr that flows south to Warsaw. After passing through Vilna, where we took tea, around 4:00 we entered short tunnels while moving at normal speed took about five minutes in duration; first it became totally dark, then suddenly light again. In Dūneburg³ the flowers were covered in snow, and we saw someone even riding on a sled. Here we drank our own coffee for the first time on the trip. And so we journeyed our second night, with more of us finding sleep, although the crowded cabins made this very uncomfortable.

¹ Chernyshovskaya, in Kaliningrad, Russia.

² Photo of Russian steam-driven train, ca. 1860.

³ Daugavpils, in Latvia.



We arrived in Petersburg⁴ Tuesday May 4 at 2:00 pm. Shortly a German-speaking young man met us; he had been sent by the Hotel de Riga to greet us, and escort us with all our luggage on two droshke carriages to the guest house. Now our travel group was enlarged by three when the young men--Regier, Goosen and Wiebe-- who had gone ahead to arrange the *Conton* (shipment) joined us again. When we were all together in the hotel we were assigned a ground floor room with adjoining sleeping cabinets, which cost 2 Rubles for 24 hours. The [Strauss] family traveling with us were upstairs in a priceworthy small cabin where they felt well, even with a half-year child.

Our travel group together discussed whether we should continue to Moscow that very night since our accommodation was appearing to become rather expensive. On the other hand, the next day would be the observance of Ascension Day (as reckoned in Prussia, and thus a day of rest). However, to have waited a whole day would have set us back too much. So, we decided to continue our journey Wednesday evening, leaving the observance of this holiday to our spirits, and the Lord's grace to allow us to experience our joy while traveling. Our train to Moscow departed at 6:00 pm.

Now more about what caught our eye in Petersburg. It is readily apparent that the city is a royal residence. Particularly noticeable are the wide streets, with a horse-drawn tram in the middle

⁴ Above map of northwestern Europe, including Western Russia, *The New Cosmopolitan World Atlas*. Rand McNally, 1992, p. 22.

whose wagons crisscross the city. On either side of this tram are the regular roads for horse drawn carriages, hitched either with one or three horses, in the latter case the middle horse has a double shaft. Traffic on these roadways is always on the right side of the tram, so that there is no confusion or meeting of carriages head-on. The wagons or carriages are small, usually for one person. There is a wooden track resting on blocks, that rest on spoons so that they cannot sink; consequently, the traffic is very quiet, even at high speed.

Also remarkable is the construction of the churches, most of which have golden domes that attract attention. An outstanding example is Saint Isaak's cathedral, the largest and most magnificent. Its outside is made of grey marble. Its main structure is surrounded by forty-eight pillars, seven feet thick and 40 feet tall. Inside are pictures of varied sizes, brilliantly decorated. We saw enormous portraits of Peter the Great and Katherine the Great on rearing horses. We also admired the wide canals with steamboats traveling on them. We saw the Neva river, as wide as the Vistula, with crowds and carriages crossing it, and on the 5th of May chunks of ice floating by.

We also visited the menagerie, where a lioness, the queen of the animal kingdom, was in a cage. We saw her trainer enter the cage and persuade her to perform her artistic tricks to much growling. As the trainer left the cage the lioness ran after him as if to attack him. The male lion is much bigger. We also saw a carousel at the marketplace with swinging baskets that would sometimes be higher and other times lower. So, what we saw suggested that here too there were things that did not serve God's glory.

By evening we returned from the city and had our tea. I note here that our travel group had now grown to seven persons, including two from Marienburg: fellow pastor Abraham Regier of Partwa and friend Enns, who travelled with us to Samara colony. Leaving Petersburg, the terrain was bad-swampy but as we approached Moscow we saw green winter growth, and the most beautiful fir forests. Two or three stations before reaching Moscow we encountered a very high wooden truss bridge that had burned and was being rebuilt. All passengers were obliged to carry their luggage down the steep embankment and up the other side to another waiting train. The weather was snowing and blowing during this transfer, so that we could barely manage. We were delayed by three hours, so that we arrived in Moscow not at 8:00 pm but 11:00 pm.

In this weather, at night, carriages were expensive. As strangers to the city, a short ride cost us 3 Rubles for 3 carriages to take us to the Hotel Petersburg where we also found some fellow Germans. We took tea and held a short worship service with our travel group, including prayer of thanks to the Lord that he had helped us on our trip thus far. In the morning, we went out with the father-in-law of the hotel owner, a German speaker, who had generously offered to show us the noteworthy sights of the city. Moscow has many aristocratic houses displaying its wealth. The city is huge, twice the overall size of Petersburg. It has nearly a thousand churches, of which most have gold-plated domed towers. Rising above all these is the Kremlin with its 500 steps. In each level there are bells, the higher one rises, the smaller they are. In the middle of the tower are several made of pure silver, 3-400 pounds in weight, with a corresponding fine sound. On the floor near the main tower was the largest bell in Europe, about 20 ft. across. Its clapper was under the bell, where it had landed when the bell crashed down as it was being mounted, along with a piece of the bell leaning against it. This bell's metal composition is 1/4th

copper and 1/4th gold and silver. We ascended the Kremlin tower to have a vista of the magnificent city with its many green roofs. My reaction on seeing this was that if there is a heaven on earth this would be it. We also visited the royal palace with its many rooms. But I will refrain from describing its pomp and splendor, although I will admit that I visited the Czar's coronation hall.

After we had eaten our four-course meal at the hotel, we received our invoice. To our surprise it cost 1 Ruble per person, twice what we had paid in Petersburg. After the fact we learned that Moscow has other, more price worthy guest houses for immigrants. All told, our Moscow expenses came to 3 Rubles per person, for 15 hours. Furthermore, Moscow has very bad paving on its outlying streets, as we learned on Friday afternoon when our party of eleven people with children traveled to the train station in five carriages. Because of the carriages' narrow wheel span, we were worried that one might tip over on hitting a paving stone crosswise or a hole where there was no paving stone. The distance to the train station was very far, but we arrived at 5:00 pm. The train cars were not very full.

Saturday at 8:00 am we reached Niznij Nowgorod. On the way we saw continual hilly steppe, alternately mountains and valleys, until at sunrise we saw the shimmering Volga River before us. We approached the river directly and entered a many tracked rail yard. This was said to accommodate the trade fairs that occur regularly and bring much traffic to the region. We visited the offices of the Volga shipping company regarding the next steamer to Samara. We were told it would not leave till Monday at 10:00 am. However, we were allowed to lodge on the ship until then. On the Volga's left bank—like Kaldowe on the Nogat—is the harbor. On the other bank, the mountain, in the more attractive natural landscape, there is near the water a line of beautiful houses. The city proper is atop the mountain whose 400 steps one can ascend on foot. After our noon meal—a meat dish—and a small nap, we went up to the city. There we found a baker who spoke German. Sunday, I rose earlier than usual, put on clean clothes. Then I led a worship service with our small group. Immediately thereafter we learned that there was a Reformed Church in the city that held German services, which we then joined belatedly. In the evening, we walked to the far end of the plateau along the Volga, where there was not yet much foliage on the plants, although the mosquitoes were beginning to bite.

Monday morning, we purchased bread and boarded the ship, departing at 10:00 am. The right bank, the mountainous side, was forested with brush covered islands, alongside this very wide river. At 7:00 am Tuesday morning we arrived at Kazan, a former residence of a [Tartar] king, now part of Russia. Two of our passengers went into the city. Later, we reached Simbirsk, a city on the right bank of the river. There we saw a two-pair horse drawn carriage with Prussian harness. Following them was a *Ration*⁵ wagon with blinds such as we had never seen before. On Wednesday, the 12th of May, we saw many white *Kolkhelfen*, which led us to hope that we were just two hours from Samara. Finally, we reached the town of Samara where we would stay at Jahnike's, where the woman and children speak German.

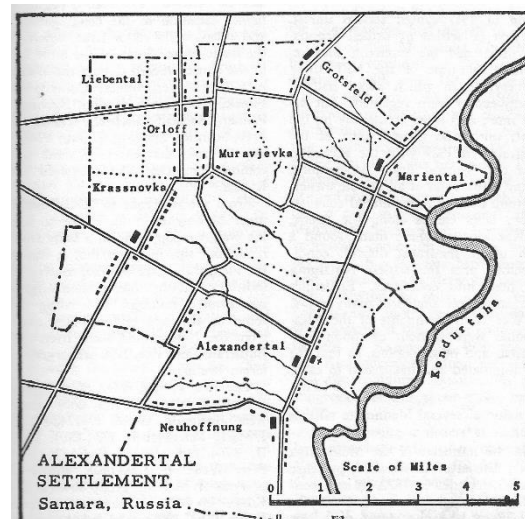
Another episode required giving glory to the Lord. We were searching for this guesthouse and couldn't find it, and were also looking for the German *Conditor* Peitz (pastry shop), when a

⁵ Government supply or mail wagon or boat. This term and concept may have been adopted from Napoleon's army.

woman addressed us: “You are German? What are you looking for? Jahnke? Then come with me. I am the woman of the house.” Indeed, we were desperate, begging, praying on our knees, about to go crazy, when the Lord had pity on us—which is why the Lord requires us to praise Him. This woman told us that had we been there the previous day at 7 in the evening, we would have had the opportunity to continue directly to the colony. Bernard Harder and his wife, along with Wiebe from Brunant Lochles had come to Samara to board a boat for a visit to Prussia. Duerksen returned to the colony with his two wagons.

We hired wagons and left for the colony the following day. The booking official in Samara asked for 18 rubles for six horses and three wagons to take us as far as Poganne where Penner lives in the forest, which is about half-way to the colony. From this town (Samara) on the landscape is flat, as we found much of Russia. But the earth is black, with green grass. There was, however, little plowed land. Soon we began to drive through standing water puddles. We also encountered a bit of snow on the north side of hills, which led us, during early summer heat, to wash off the dust that was especially present outside the city from our hands and faces with the snow. Halfway to Poganne we saw fields of sunflower stalks from the previous year, and stubble from the rye and wheat fields which the Küßen were burning. In the Küßen villages we saw much straw but not being used for bedding. They deposit the manure into pits at the end of the village.

Three miles out of Samara city the front axle of the wagon in which I was riding broke. The driver immediately rode one of the horses off and found a used replacement and installed it. In 1 ½ hours we were on our way again. Eventually we came to the Sock River. After an eight-hour wait we were able to cross it. In this area the soil was good, as could be seen from the stubble, and from the abundant pastures. By 9:00 pm we arrived at Penner's in Poganne. He asked us how many people were in our party. When told, he suggested we drive to the guesthouse where we would find lodging. He followed us to the guesthouse where we had tea together. After some conversation he asked me if I wished to stay with him and his wife. So we engaged a droshke with bells that took us to Penner's place. Next morning we continued, arriving at the colony on Friday, May 14, at 5:00 pm. It happened to be our mother's birthday, which we included in our prayer before we went to sleep at elder Sukkau's.



The head (*Erster*) in the[Alexandertal] colony is Uncle Klaas Epp [Sr.] of Neu Hoffnung [New Hope], where the son told us that the next construction site was Sukkau's, so that is where we got off. Regier and Enns [of our travel group] travelled on to Jakob Wall's. At Sukkau's, Jakob Toews, his father-in-law, was visiting. Klaas Epp came by from Duerksen's, so I asked him about Orloff village; he indicated it was 11 miles distant. So those people should be sent word of our arrival, which was then done. At evening we went out to visit the pastures, and the livestock that had been put out to graze. The next day we also saw very fine rye, that is usually seeded in the fall.

The next day, Saturday, at 10:00 am I travelled with Ohm Sukkau and travel companion Andres to Orloff village. On this journey I heard that close relatives lived there. When we arrived, I shortly saw my sister and brother-in-law and their children who could hardly wait to see me. So, we greeted one another. They are all well. Ohm Sukkau asked me if I would consider taking his place in Sunday's church service. I declined, because of the time being too short and too agitated. That evening three more neighbors came to visit: Regier from Fürstenwerder and his wife, Franz Martens, and Thiessen from Halbstadt-- the first of whom have a daughter of Br. Epp. Sunday morning we drove to church where there were many acquaintances. I distributed letters from Prussia. After the service elder Ham held instructions with the youth. We drove on to Duerksen's who knew we were coming; this visit would not have occurred, but we were already at this end [of the settlement] and Sukkau wanted to make the visit, and we wanted to spare the horses. We were there for noon and for coffee, after which we visited Ohm Ewert who lived nearby. Ewert asked me if I would replace him in the church service the next Sunday. The next morning I took care of business and calculations with brother-in-law Sukkau. Afternoon we decided to visit Mother Enns in Grotzfelde. I drove there with Sukkau; we met many dear friends. I stayed on for the night. Next morning I went to see Brother Isaak who lived nearby. In the afternoon I drove with Mother Enns and travel colleague Wiebe to Jakob Wall's in Marienthal to celebrate an engagement. The eldest daughter is marrying the son of Wall's brother. I met brother-in-law Regier of Heubuden who has hardly aged at all. In the evening we returned to Epp's. Wednesday morning, I went with Jakob Sukkau to B. Riesen, and then for noon to the already mentioned brother-in-law Regier. Afternoon I went to J. Ham's in Grotzfelde, [the wife] is Martens' Tinnchen. Here I was pleased, these two appear to be happy. He especially acknowledges his Lord, who has brought them this far. After this, at 6:00 pm I went to elder Ham, where there are in the house four grown sons and two daughters. One of the daughters is said to have a brother of the above-named Ham who is a confessed Christian and has a windmill in Neuhoffnung. Then I rode with my brother-in-law and Agathe to Orloff. Thursday it rained; when the rain let up, I traveled toward evening to W. Janzen in Marienthal where I spent the night. Next morning S. Wall drove me to Brother Harder in Neuhoffnung where we met brother-in-law Sukkau and Claas Epp. In the evening we went to Abr. Harder, and then back home with brother-in-law Sukkau. I note here that on Friday I went out with Br. Harder to see the new tracts of land at Marieinau and Lindenau where the land is flat as in Murajevka; part of it is being rented out to the Kussens to cultivate. The yield on 3 *Morgens* or *Desyatin* of land⁶ will be about 7-10 Rubles. In the evening, I rode out with brother-in-law to see his land and stopped in at the Martens and Driedger's.

Saturday the 22nd May I stayed at Sukkau's all day and prepared myself for preaching the Word. Sunday the 23rd May we drove to church where I with the grace of God preached from Ephesians 6: 11-17. As far as church service custom is concerned, it is very close to what we do in Ladekopp. The Biblical text is read, and before the last hymn the Lord's Prayer is recited. Attendance was abundant. The church building walls are not yet finished [mud-manure-straw plaster, lime whitewash], and the floor is not yet finished either [plastered with manure]. After the service we went to nephew Riesen's where the aunt is suffering from gout, and walks with crutches, although she seemed quite well otherwise.

⁶ The German and Russian land units of the time, both about 2.5 English acres.

In the afternoon we went to see the Kondurtsha river alongside the flat meadows. This river is deep and about twice as wide as the Schwente and has steep banks. In the meadows and beyond are many bushes, from which we heard the songs of birds including wild geese, ducks, nightengales flying up, cuckoos, and bitterns. For *Faspa* we went to fellow pastor Entz, where the entire Riesen family joined us. While there we determined that we would leave the colony on Tuesday, and for which we reserved a driver named Albright. So, on Tuesday, May 25, the day of departure, at 7:00 am we drove with Sukkau's to Neuhoftnung where we had tea with Br. Entz, and to Claas Epp's for noon where the fish tasted very good. We took our leave at about 1:30 pm and arrived at Poganne where we had tea and supper with Penner and our travel companions. I alone stayed there for the night. Next morning we all took tea at the guesthouse and left somewhat early for Samara. One mile before reaching the city the soil is good and slightly sloping down to the Volga River. In the meadows there also grew white clover which we had not seen in the colony.

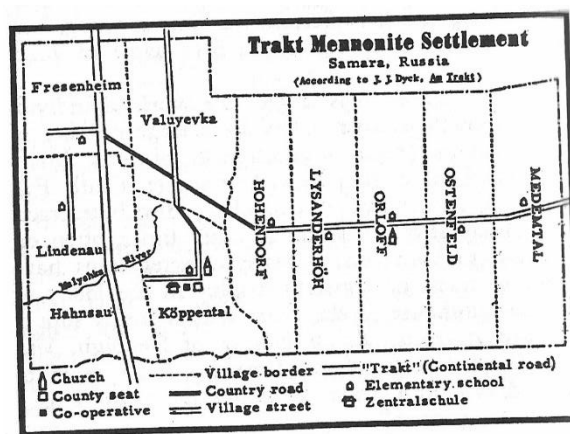
Having arrived safely at Jahnike's in Samara, we asked if anyone had recently arrived from Prussia. The immediate answer was that "yes" four persons were here that awaited us, but they had momentarily gone out. When they returned it was father Harder, Brucks, and Claassens, the last being two brothers from Diebau and Leske; also, Lieutenant Maschke. We received our letters, I from my wife, and from my brother-in-law Regier of Koszelitzke. On the day of rest at Jahnike's, Claas Epp's son, who is also called Claas Epp, arrived from Saratov on his way to Samara to visit. That evening we were all together but would all go our separate ways the next morning. We agreed that we would meet with Claas Epp Jr.⁷ before or at Saratov, on the 13th June, on his way to Molotschna. Three days earlier, as we were leaving the colony, our travel companions Regier and Enns had gone ahead and were to arrive in Saratov. Claas Epp confirmed that they had indeed already arrived. I rejoiced to have received written news from my wife and family, and immediately wrote a letter home, including the good news that my father-in-law had safely arrived.

After leaving Samara our steamer arrived in Saratov after a 22-hour long journey. This stretch of the Volga has a very beautiful mountainous bank, a steep white limestone cliff topped by bushes and forests. It was a remarkable scene of the beauty of nature. Such vegetation was usually on the mountain side of the very wide Volga River where the steamers crisscrossed each other. On the other side of the infinite water of the river meadows and assorted bushes could be seen. In Saratov we drove to our host who spoke German. He advised us to make our way to the river bank to catch a 7:00 am ferry that would take us across the river to Kossakenstadt.⁸ On our ride across the Volga we saw the first German settlers who were not Mennonites. These people who spoke our mother tongue bid us welcome. But before long their party became so joyous (*lebenslustig*), singing beautifully multi-voiced harmonious folk songs, alternately drinking excessively and shooting pistols into the air, that we were not receptive to this society. They told us they were going to a wedding. Our arrival in Kossakenstadt had been announced, so a

⁷ Claasz Epp, Jr. ME II, p. 234. Apparently the planned second visit between Peter Dyck and the future visionary did not take place.

⁸ Also called Pokrovsk. Renamed Engels in 1924, and designated the capital of the Volga German Soviet Socialist Republic, which was abolished in 1941 as Germany invaded Russia.

German host helped us off our wagon and settled into our quarters. Next morning we enjoyed breakfast and left by 10:00 for the colony, about 35 miles (50 *Werst*) distant. This steppe is very flat and has good black earth. Shortly we came upon many granaries (*Getreidehauser*) where threshing was going on. In the middle of a seven-mile stretch we came upon a station, a house, that offered a rest stop, food, and feed. By 6:00 evening we arrived in Frösenheim at the home of Johann Toews—whose father had been the elder of the Ladekopp congregation in Prussia.



Presently the whole neighborhood gathered, many of whom were acquaintances. That night I stayed with Ohm Toews's son-in-law Isaak Epp. The next day, a Sunday, we went to church in Köppental where I met many friends and relatives, including Br. Sukkau, Johann Epp, Aron Esau and all the Hams, including the elder David Ham; also, old Ohm Claassen of Tiegenhagen, along with his children. The grain is farther along here than in the Samara [Alexandertal] colony, but the nice rye of there is missing here. The summer planting is good but sprouted sparingly with good buds along with many weeds. After several days the immigrants from Prussia came to see me, such as: L. Bergman of Brösk, later Entz of Orloff, along with Fröse and Wiens of Baiershorst. The others came after our departure from the colony. We were together several days with most of them in Köppental: Wall, G. Ham, Martin Claassen who is the teacher in the school; also, at Hahnsau old Janzen of Menteichderhinterfeld, his son; Wiebe of Wieban, Michael Ham who owns a vinegar brewery, and also a teacher of the same name, a very gracious man who offered a fine prayer for us travelers, committing us to the Lord.

The nearby colony [village?] of Lindenau that I drove through is in a needy condition. There is only one barn in the entire village; the houses and buildings are built weakly of wood and mud brick. The inhabitants are without resources (*unbemittelt*), the soil is sandy, not fertile. On our last days we also visited another division, five wagons of people, including the new immigrants, our travel group, others from the colony, and chief chairman (*Obervorsteher*) Dyck.⁹ We traveled to Hohendorf, on the high steppe. Here wells need to be 27 Klaster (x 7 feet) deep. Finally we visited Lysanderhöf where the next settlement of immigrants is to take place. On this steppe we saw some weeds, but also good foot-tall grass where, upon the establishment of boundaries, everyone will have access to grazing land. The landscape is very flat, with mild black earth such as I've seen elsewhere.

On our return on June 12th we visited acquaintances in Frösenheim such as David Toews, nephew of elder Toews, Johannes Toews of Schönsee, and Jakob Claassen, the teacher's son. Sunday I was in church where teacher (*Gemeindelehrer*) Bernhard Harder¹⁰ gave the sermon—a man of lively spirit and talent, whom I have heard preach on several occasions. He was also in the colony for the 16 days of my visit. He had come from Molotschna colony and will visit the

⁹ Marginal note in Agathe Regier Janzen's *Abschreibung* identifies this individual as "C.J.Dyck's grandfather."

¹⁰ See Bernhard Harder, ME II, pp. 658-659.

Samara colony in three weeks. This man is a tool in God's hand who has surely blessed many souls. After an inspiring presentation in the Hahnsau school by Harder, a man came before him, bowed down with his arm around himself, said, "I feel myself so very depressed, will there be any of Christ's grace for me?" He was sobbing under his pain, until the giver of grace opened his mouth and assured the suffering man of Christ's grace.

On June 6 I gave my humble sermon based on Revelations 7: 13-17, having to do with the cross of Christ as the central point of our peace.¹¹ The formal aspect of worship services is somewhat different from other Mennonite congregations. The service opens with a sung hymn. Then the one reading the Scripture comes to the altar table. This is followed by an opening prayer. Then he withdraws and sings with the congregation a second hymn. As the final verse is being sung he steps forward to the pulpit and delivers the sermon. This church, built of red brick, stands on a knoll at the end of Köppental village. At both ends there are hallways; at one end the entrance, with steps and a door, on either side of which are rooms, one for men, the other for women, to hang their coats and to withdraw from the service. At the other end is the preacher's room that has a door leading directly to the pulpit which is the height of the choir platform.

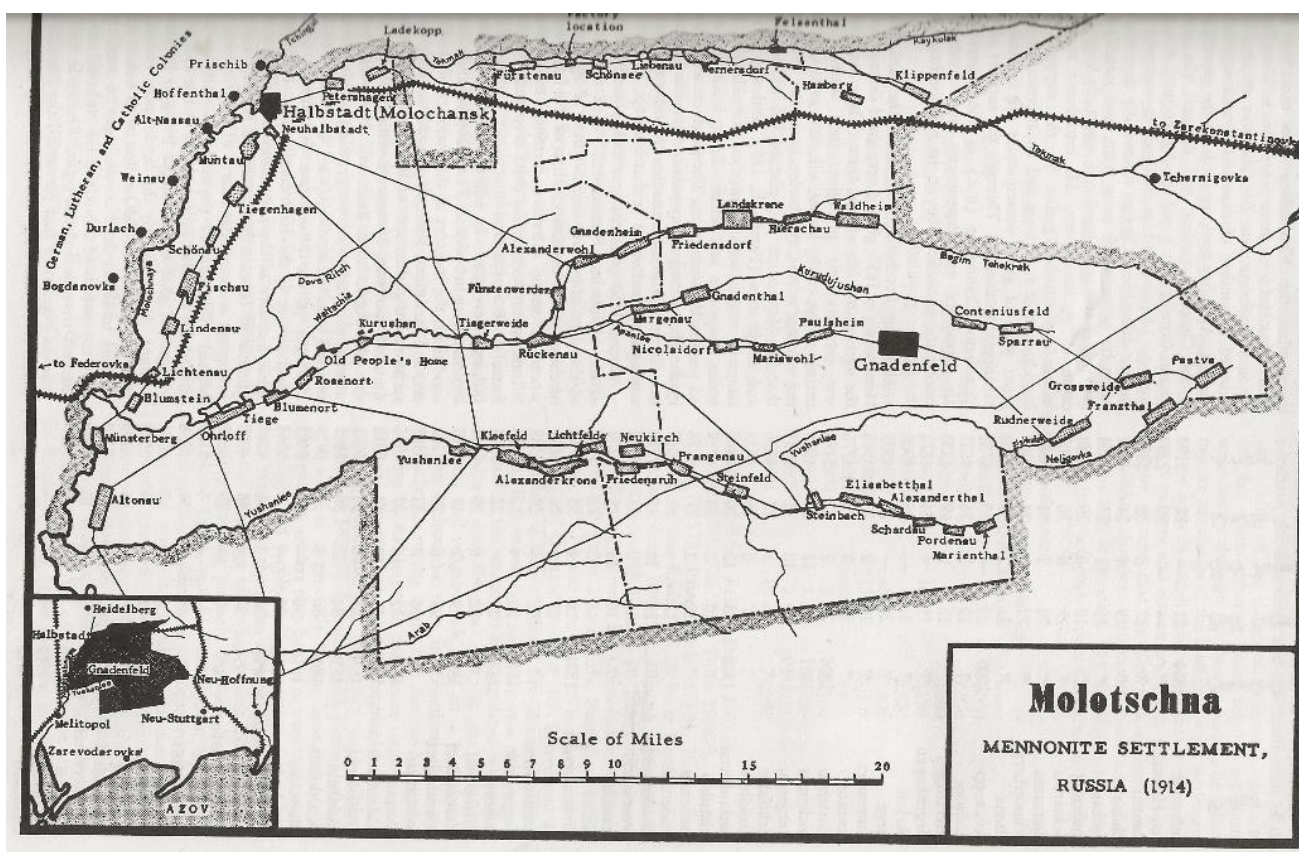
My lodging during my visit to this colony was at Br. Sukkau, Joh. Epp, and Aaron Esau. The latter drove me to his fields to see summer seedings, but very little rye, but what there was had already headed out so that by the time I reached Berdiansk on June 26 it would have been ripe and partially mowed or harvested. Because of insufficient rain in Saratov little seeding had yet been done. For the same reason there is a shortage of material with which to thatch the roofs of buildings. Most of the roofs of outbuildings were poorly covered, some even with wheat straw. Cattle and horse grazing on community pastures under the watchful eye of a herdsman occurs on the steppe beyond the end of the village. There the native grasses are tall but with very thin blades.

Now I end my account of Saratov colony and join my travel companions and brother Wall who drove us on the 14th of June to visit the market at Warenburg. This German settlement is a church center on the Volga River. It is connected by Ration mail service to Selmon along the river. This morning was very warm, very oppressive, and we longed for a bit of breeze. Selmon, another German village, was the embarkation point of river steamers, one of which was scheduled to leave at 2:00 pm. We were prepared to board, but because of the masses of people gathered there we decided to travel further to Firitzien. There, however, we learned that we had arrived one day late for embarkation. So, we had to wait three days till Friday morning when we boarded a steamer for Rostov which we reached Saturday evening, the beginning of Russian Pentecost. We had hoped to reach Berdiansk during these days but were disappointed. The Lord wanted it otherwise. We stayed another two days and celebrated Pentecost. We were told that there are few Germans here. So when we arrived the ship captain permitted us to lodge on board. However, the next morning, due to the ship needing to be cleaned, we disembarked, leaving our luggage attended, and went to find accommodations. Humans wish, and God consents. After we had walked a distance uphill to the city, we saw a sausage shop and entered. On inquiry, the woman answered in good German. Now we had been helped by the good Lord, to whom be the glory. I had been very distressed in my heart. We wished to find rest; Pentecost had dawned. Why should we rush around foolishly? This woman sent us with a lad to a German lodging,

¹¹ Peter Dyck, Sermon # 51. Köppental. Mennonite Library & Archives.

albeit with Jewish managers; the wife, from the Baltic provinces, spoke German. So, we had been helped, had good fortune, and a friendly reception. Thus we celebrated Pentecost. In due course we reached Taganrog by Wednesday. We needed to spend two days here too, finally leaving on Friday evening at 6:00 pm, reaching Berdiansk Saturday morning at 6:00 am.

These small cities offer evidence of much ship travel. Many ships are anchored in the harbors. All the masts and sails were like a forest of trees before our eyes. On this last ship journey a young man named Reunez from Molotschna colony was accompanying his brother who was emigrating. Disembarking in Berdiansk, we were picked up from the ship by a canoe. Reaching the port, we were met by a German who introduced us to a brother Janzen who originated in his youth from Tiegenhof. When we met him, we were introduced to his wife, daughter of a Riesen from Danzig. In the afternoon I went to Elder Leonard Suderman who asked me to preach the communion preparation sermon the next day—which I did from I Corinthians 11: 26-29. Sunday afternoon, as usual, he taught the children; I joined him in this. At the beginning and ending of this teaching he led the group in a kneeling prayer. He also led in singing, announcing each verse



beforehand. He also taught from our Catechism, during which time the children not yet baptized, with Bible in hand, were asked to find a verse, and respond to questions from the elder. Our coffee we took with my friend deacon brother Klassen, who is related to me such that his grandmother in Damfelde was a sister to my grandmother in Herrenhagen.

Klassen's wife, who suffers from gout, was in her garden, one of the beautiful gardens of Berdiansk. They display abundant growth of fruit trees, other plants, and also vineyards. Toward evening we went to Jakob Suderman, a brother of the deceased Abraham Suderman of Kaldowe, whose son Isaak is married to Dyck's daughter from Brodsak—a fine young couple.

The next day, Monday, the elder drove with us the eight hours to the Molotschna colony, including the two hours we spent at a station along the way. On the 28th of June afternoon we arrived in Molotschna colony, driving through Marienthal, Pordenau, Schardau, and Alexanderthal, arriving at my cousin Johannes Klaassen in Elisabeththal. We greeted each other although he already knew of my coming. He owns a wind-driven oil press (*Winde Trittmühle*). The next day I found my travel companions at Peter Schmidt's in nearby Steinbach. This man has much land and is wealthy, while at the same time he and his whole household radiate a love-filled Christian sensibility.

Wednesday, we drove to Lichtfelde to my cousin Dirk Wiebe. He has the unusual practice of treating muscle sprains (*Verrenkungen*) and bone fractures, as well as inner sicknesses. Almost all kinds of injuries come his way for treatment, not only from the big colony, but also from the Russian population beyond. He has established Monday and Friday as days when he sees patients, so he is not burdened the entire time with those who come to him. He does not earn much, but the Lord has blessed him for his good will with a quite acceptable situation. Then I drove with Peter Schmidt to a wedding in Gnadenfeld, and then the next day with friend Rempel to Gnadenheim to Mrs. teacher Harder to deliver a letter her husband had given to me in Saratov—this brother I would greet again before leaving the colony because he returned home on Sunday.

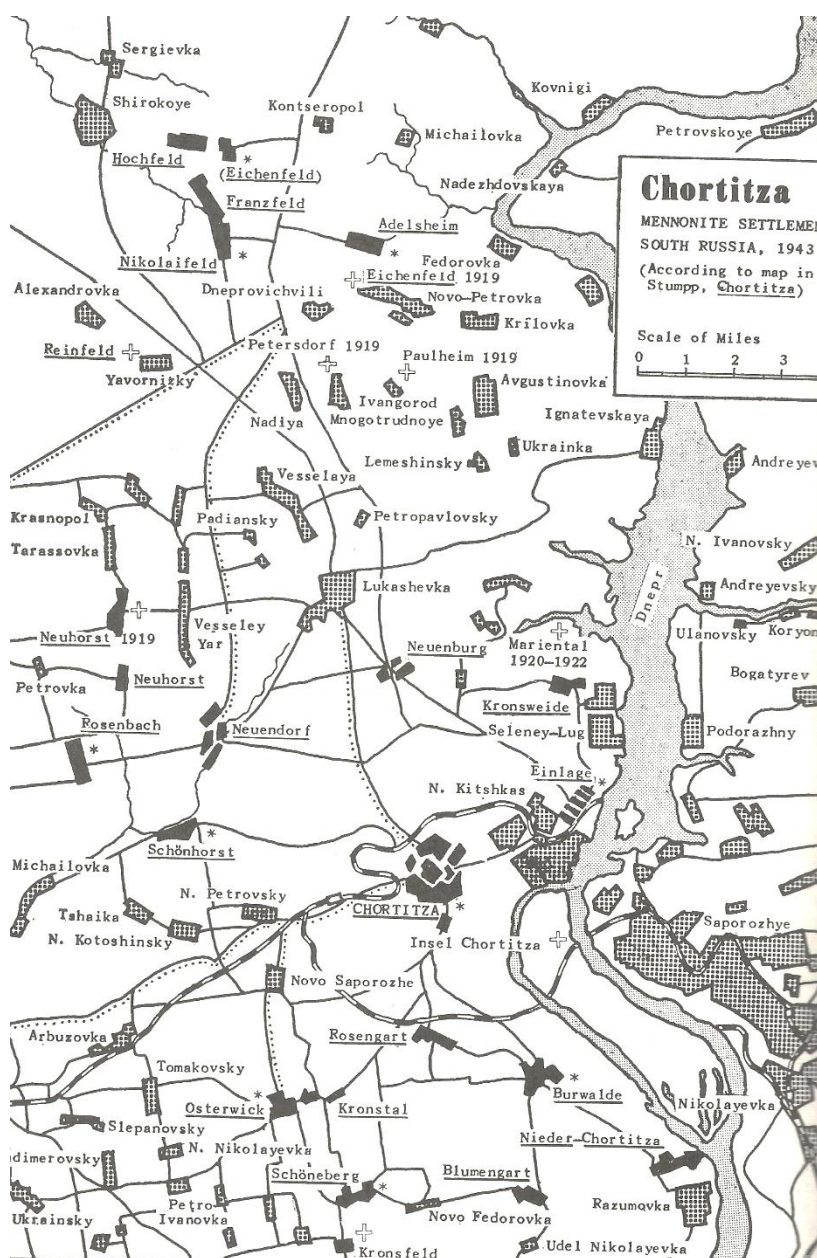
Later, with Peter Schmidt, I visited the farm of Phillip Wiebe, who happened to be home. We went through his garden and his young forest of ash and oak trees; unfortunately bugs were eating his garden. From there we went to Cousin Friesen in Orlof to see his stone cutting machines; here I stayed the night. Next, I was with Johannes Claassen, originally from Tiege in Prussia, who has an oil press. From there to Peter Regier in Altenau, at which place I stayed the night with my friend Johannes Regier—my wife's cousin—who is actively engaged in discussions about our Prussian government's pressure regarding military service.

Returned to Elisabeththal, I visited brother-in-law Abraham Martens, married to my cousin (lit., *der meine Cousine hat*). I also had the opportunity to visit Tante Claassen, and all her children. Also, I visited Abraham Claassen on a Sunday, after I had had noon meal with elder Peters—he had a child that was deaf, dumb, and blind, before it died earlier this year. With my Elisabeththal cousin Claassen I drove to Peter Classen in nearby Schönsee, to teacher Aron Rempel, who is married to my cousin. When I visited him he was suffering from a serious cough. This (Martens?) brother-in-law drove me to see brother Claassen in Ladekop, who is also a teacher in the Halbstadt congregation. Especially noteworthy was his big garden, 3 Morgen, half of which was planted to kernel fruit, the other half to plums. Some of his yield was for personal consumption, the rest for sale, which he expected to be 1,000 Rubles. He intended to rent out this garden. The reason it was so productive during the summer dry time is that he had arranged spring rain water to flow from road ditches from both ends of the village to his garden and those of a few neighbors. From this visit we went directly to Halbstadt to see Epp's of Fürstenwerder

who had emigrated to Russia the previous year. I stayed with them because this friend had gotten almost no harvest and was seeking to buy land anywhere, which led us to drive the length of Molotschna villages, on the way stopping in Schönau to see fellow pastor Thiessen, and in Lindenau brother-in-law who has my cousin, the daughter of V. Wiebe's sister; also, visited Mrs. Leonard Dyck in Münsterberg. On our return journey we stopped at the grave of father David Epp. I attended the communion service of the Pordenau congregation where I gave the sermon (*Dankpredigt*) on Luke 17: 11-19. In Halbstadt I got acquainted with Jakob Martens (of Tiegenhagen), teacher of the congregation; a man of Christian sensibility, engaged for the kingdom of God, and has a big collection of books which he seeks to disseminate widely.

After a full week we began another trip with friend Esau and his son, and my travel companion Andres to Cornies along the Molotschna river. From Altonau we drove beyond the colony border to a state station (*Kronansiedlung*) where we saw gardens, much forest with new trees planted in rows. We took lunch and afternoon drove through Melitopol where there was a market. After another several hours we came to Johann Cornies' lands. There we saw barley in bundles, and the horse-drawn harvesting machine at work. Approaching [Youshenlee] we saw many beautiful buildings having to do with the operation of the business. We saw gardens, unusual trees, plants, and shrubs. We drove with J. Cornies to his brick factory, and drove around his fields, and visited his sheep flocks, his sheep barns, surrounded by more gardens and vineyards. After four hours we returned, ate a noon meal and rested. Then we visited the wheat fields and finally saw a warehouse where wool from previous years that had not been sold was stored.

Next day we went to Schonteich and Menteich to visit Schrodgers and Martens, the latter of whom have abundant land. I stayed there for the night, and the next day went to Dyck's at Brodsk. This estate could be seen from a distance, the many buildings on the wide steppe are made of white bricks with colored roofs. Dyck has a love of horses, which were



paraded for us. We also toured his exquisite garden. Nearby these installations there was a schoolhouse where teacher Franz instructs the youth as future teachers and in sciences. Then we returned to Halbstadt. After a day there we toured the German colonist's villages nearby with fine grain fields. Then Halbstadt experienced a fine rain. I drove to Tiegenghagen to Martens who drove me to Lichtfelde as promised to cousin Dirk Wiebe where I stayed overnight. The next day I went to Peter Schmidt in Elisabeththal, preached Sunday in Pordenau. We agreed to leave for home the following Tuesday. We took our leave of all the friends who were at the Martens on Sunday afternoon and drove to Halbstadt in two wagons. We had been in Molotschna three weeks.

On Wednesday the 21st of July we departed Molotschna, me with Esau and son, accompanied by our four travel companions headed for home via the Chortitza colony. Traveling with Epp's wagon and a mail wagon, we arrived at Schönwiese, at the home of Bokk, a Mennonite land owner with a mill stone business. Driving past Aleksandrovsk we arrived in Einlage on the Dnieper where the river is uncrossable because of the rocks in the river and on the banks. We stopped at the merchant Rempel in Einlage at noon, on our way to Chortitz where we stopped at the Löpp implement factory. Löpp's brother is the current fire chief in Tiegenghagen, Prussia. At the factory they called the current elder Bernhard Dyck and the congregational elder Jakob Regier, the latter of whom is my wife's uncle once removed (*Vetter Onkel*). These church elders helped us, at our request, to obtain a copy of Czar Paul the First's 1800 *Privilegium* to the southern Mennonite colony. This document is housed in the attic of a special building built for this purpose. The elder gave me a hand-written copy of the original.

As we were driving out of the Chortitza colony we passed through the villages of Schönhorst and Neuendorf. In the second, we were greeted with curses; from the point of view of education, these people seemed to be quite backward. We then reached Heinrichs, out in the country, who dwelt in a Russian village where Epp and I stayed the night. Although they were Mennonites, it was a very small uncomfortable Russian house. Next day we came to a small colony of mostly Dycks where we ate our noon meal of very fine lentil soup. It tasted like peas. From there we continued through the afternoon and evening until we reached the city of Nikopol. The day had been very warm and dusty because of the road dust. This city lies on the Dnieper. Here we found a German guesthouse and spent the night with a Mennonite named Dombrowski. We bade farewell to our friend Epp, who wished to return home. I and my four young companions set out on our home trip, by steamboat. By evening on this Sunday we reached the town of Cherson. The trip was pleasant; I had much to discuss with a Protestant pastor on board. This town is not far from the Molotschna colony at Halbstadt. We saw plentiful woods and meadows, nice and green, with trees growing in the meadows. In the evening in Cherson, travel companion Andres and I looked up friend Peter Klaassen. We drove through the streets, finally arriving at our destination at 10:00 pm. No one was home except a Russian and a girl, neither of whom knew German. In order to determine whether this was the right house, I went up to a window and examined the pictures on the wall. Immediately I found acquaintances including an uncle and aunt of these acquaintances whom I knew from Wernersdorf in Prussia. After about an hour Klaassen came home and recognized me, after I told him who I was. Next morning we bought several watermelons at the market. We also identified another acquaintance named Behnhert from Menteich, who had just arrived from Prussia three weeks earlier. He shared much news.

We again boarded a steamer which served as government or mail transport (*Ration*). These were becoming ever larger, to accommodate the greater traffic as we approached Odessa, and, at 200 feet long (16 *Ruthen*, rods), would be better able to navigate the Black Sea waters safely. As we traveled, the water gradually became green, not just on the surface, but all the way down. Then it changed again to clear. When we arrived in Odessa, located on a corner of the Black Sea, we checked in at the Hotel Europa. In the evening we went out where there were shops that offered [bath] opportunities some charging 5 kopeks. We generally bathed in cities that were on rivers, something that in the summer heat was good for us. This is southern Russia's most magnificent city, in size comparable to Moscow. Here the paving stones, of granite, are better, especially of the outlying streets and roads. And there are smart high rise houses. Many inhabitants speak German. One could see in their German faces that they were healthier than those in eastern Russia, for example Samara.

The city is built on a high plateau overlooking the sea below. The city and sea are joined by a stairs that has about 200 steps, and is 66 feet wide, with terrace-like vistas from the city. The view is beautiful, with ships sailing on the sea, others anchored in the harbor. Beyond, on the horizon just the sea and the sky. Tuesday, July 24, we traveled by rail to the station at Cherispol, where we again took the Russian mail wagon. We had contacted the police in Odessa and reserved places. This is required if one wants to travel from station to station, without losing much time at each place. When we arrived at Therespel at 11:00 pm we took off immediately on the next leg of our journey. After we had traveled through the night, I became sick. Although these wagons had straw boxes (*Strohgefässe*),¹² the uneven ruts and the fast speed of travel brought us to a state of extreme discomfort, backache, and exhaustion. So as we traveled further, we stopped to rest for four hours at each Ration stop and would need to awaken in the morning while the horses were being harnessed. Because of all this for many passengers, the Russian authorities have attached a little notebook to the window of the station where passengers can enter their complaints. This booklet also informs the traveler of customs requirements for various nationalities.

We came to a city named Kischinev. We had covered 45 miles in 2 ½ days, but two nights we rested for 4-5 hours. Traveling from Odessa, the soil is at first sandy and bad, but then soon it improves, yielding good fruits and green grassy steppes. The closer we came to Kischinev the better the crops appeared, including the wheat that had been cut and the rape seed that was heading out. Welsh corn, also called *mais*, or Turkish wheat, was not yet ripe but was as tall as a man, with big ears of grain. In Kischinev we saw irrigation water being pumped by a bucket wheel powered by horses, the water running in furrows to the crops. We stopped to buy bread which was very delicious. We continued on the mail route through this beautiful region, where grass was growing plentifully in the valleys as well as on the hillsides. We came to the first young forest like we had encountered in southern Russia. The most impressive were the linden trees with two colored leaves. We took a side road for a way and found an eatery called the Ergejef Girl and enjoyed our meal at 8:00 pm. I was beginning to feel a bit better than in the morning, when it had seemed I would not be able to endure the continuous day and night travel. We drove on, one station after the next. We saw long-horned cattle, ones that are categorized as

¹² A bed or seat in a straw box, intended to serve as a cushion, did not apparently work very well for this traveler.

buffalos, with wide bodies and horns that extend straight out of the head. Finally, on the 29th of July at 12 noon we came to Balti,¹³ the last city that we would encounter in Russia.

Several Ration stations before we reached the Austrian border alongside the river Pruth we met a landowner who lived near the river Dniester at Bendry. He was on his way to Switzerland. He told us that goods purchased in Odessa for 25 Ruble would sell beyond the Austrian border for 50 Ruble. On encountering the Pruth River, we followed it till we reached the Austrian border on the other side of which flows the Moldau. Our last Russian postal stop was at Niwizelle, right against the Austrian border. Because we had not had a substantial meal for a while and had a good appetite, we arranged to have a heap of eggs fried for our *Mittagessen* at 4:00 pm.

We found a Jewish driver who would assist us in crossing the border and to accompany us to Chernowitz.¹⁴ He did not want to do this for 6 Ruble, so we added 2 more. We came to the border gate on a bridge; the gate opened and our passports were taken by the official. They examined our luggage. Crossing into Austria we wondered, “now what?” We still did not have transportation to continue. Finally, after much back and forth, we arranged two wagons with horses. Our driver had previously lent us 10 Austrian guilders which we spent, to be paid back at Chernowitz. We finally continued our journey at 8:00 pm Friday, arriving at midnight. Our driver took us to a Jewish guesthouse near the railway station, where we rested the night. Next morning we went early to bathe, after which we rushed to the train station to obtain Austrian money. We boarded the train at 6:00 am. Chernowitz boasts vigorous growth of Welsh corn, grain and trees, especially *Pyramidenpagel*. At 12:00 noon we reached the Stanislaw station where we enjoyed our noon meal. Leaving here we encountered diverse travelers from Moldova so there was much exchange of experiences. Afternoon we saw fine forests, especially oaks, with meadows and cattle on them. We crossed the Dniester River at Vobroszin and entered Galicia, in due course reaching Lemberg.¹⁵ There we changed trains and saw spruce forests; the soil became sandier but wherever there was good soil it was heavily planted. Arriving in Krakow we saw tall cranes, high walls, and tall buildings.

Before reaching Prussia we did our financial accounting (*Verrechnungen*). The Austrian and Prussian border officials were together in the same building. Our travel documents were inspected and we continued our journey at noon, on this day, Sunday, the 1st of August. Immediately after continuing our journey we saw many tin and iron mines, then the factories and smelting and coke plants as well as coal mines. In Silesia, there was scanty fruit; the blessings were all underground. After Breslau¹⁶ the soil became blacker. We had coffee in this beautiful city and continued our journey at 6:00 pm. The railroad passes through the middle of the city, so we saw many factories and five story houses. A few stations before Krentz the train stopped for two hours at midnight, due to other trains passing. We reached Krentz at 6:00 am. From there we had a ticket to Marienburg, passing through Nukel, Bromberg, and Dirschau. With God’s graceful protecting hand we reached Marienburg at 2:00 pm on the 2nd August. By 10:00 pm I was in Tiege, and through God’s grace returned whole to my family. Peter Dyck

¹³ Since then, has been in Moldova, and is currently in Romania.

¹⁴ Chernovcy on large map; now Chernivtsi, in Ukraine.

¹⁵ Lvov, now city in Western Ukraine.

¹⁶ Wroclaw, now city in Poland.

The second Russia journey in the year 1870 by Grandfather Peter Dyck

Copy by Agathe M. Janzen

My travel diary from Marienburg via the border at Eydkühnen in Russia, via Dünaborg, Orel, Karkov, and Taganrog in southern Russia, to Berdiansk, Ekaterinoslav, return to Chortitza and Molotschna colonies, again via Rostow to the Caucasus via Stavropol to Pyatigorsk, from there return via Rostow, Taganrog and Berdiansk through Molotschna colony via Cherson and Odessa, through Kyiv, Kursk, Orel and Dünaborg to the border via Königsberg to Marienburg.

Peter Dyck

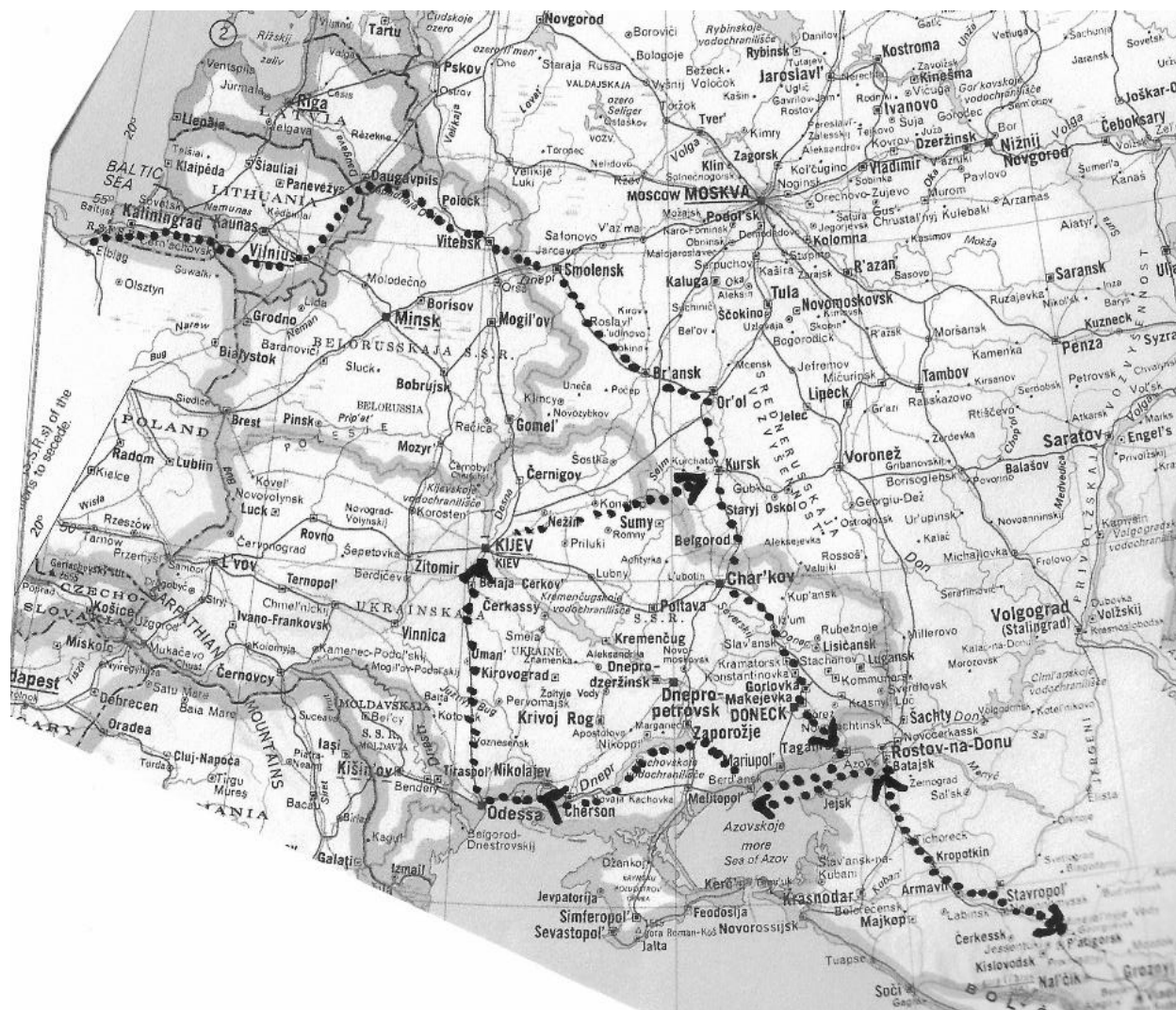
In the year 1870 May 15 was the day the trip to South Russia began. Elder Wilhelm Ewert¹⁷ of the Thorn congregation, and I, Peter Dyck, were deputized by the Mennonite congregations to explore future asylum in Russia because of the law concerning military service that had been imposed on us. This was the purpose of our trip. We left the same day at 10 pm. Our delegation also included young Abraham Regier of Herrenhagen, my wife's brother's son.¹⁸ We arrived at the border at 7:00 am the next morning, everything went very well with the officials. We reached Dünaborg on Monday evening, and further to Vitebsk in Poland. On this stretch we saw how little value is placed on wood, for the trees that had been cut to make room for the railroad had simply been left alongside the tracks to rot in nature. We arrived in Vitebsk Tuesday morning at 10:00. This city is beautiful in a Russia sense. The Jewish population is quite large here, many of whom speak German. In the afternoon we traveled on to Smolensk, where we were reminded of the time when the French imposed their unique religious laws on the population. Smolensk is a lively old fortress city, on the banks of the Dniepro river that is about half the size of our Nogat river. From Vitebsk to Smolensk we saw great masses of split logs. The soil improved, became blacker and less sandy, the farther we travelled. We saw many vistas of fruit trees on the fields, and forests—beautiful birch, spruce, and fir. Travelling toward Orel, we saw marshes and swamps. As we approached Orel the soil turned dark black, followed by high steppes with occasional fields of winter rye and summer-planted crops. We arrived in Orel 8:00 am Wednesday and departed at 11:00 am. I was able to clean the dust off of myself. My travel companions went off to see the city while I wrote in my diary. With Samuel, we could say that “thus far hath the Lord helped us.” From Monday in Dünaborg I was exhausted from the constant moving we had experienced. I was not sure I could withstand more of this. However, even though we did not sleep especially well, I began to feel better. In those first days of travel, I experienced nose bleeding several times, after which my fatigue disappeared, and my head became lighter. This is how we experience God's goodness, faithfulness, and unconditional love (*Barmherzigkeit*). We are unworthy of the great deeds that the Lord has done, so we rejoice. The food we brought from home we shared communally. We partook now of one of the three

¹⁷ See *Mennonite Encyclopedia* II, p. 276 for fuller information on Elder Ewert. He also joined the exploratory delegation to America and became the first elder of the Bruderthal Mennonite Church of Marion County, Kansas,

¹⁸ And future son-in-law, husband of Dyck's daughter Catherine.

provision bags, now out of another. We enjoyed the fresh ham from Torun and told ourselves that it needed to be eaten first before it spoiled. But we also then discovered that my butter kept quite well.

In Orel we spoke with a German railroad construction contractor, from Filsit, who told us that the surrounding soil is quite good, which was confirmed on the continuing journey to Kursk. We saw dark green rye, consistent throughout the field. So we departed from Orel Thursday, May



18, at 9:00 am, traveling 2nd class because there was no 3rd class accommodation. We arrived in Kursk at 8:00 pm. Here we met a water well driller named Ernst Hoppe of Kursk, who told us about lands to be had in the vicinity, sites where he had drilled wells. He said he knew a person with connections in Petersburg who told him that the administration of lands was very problematic. But his contact would gladly sell us land and within eight days make the necessary paperwork available to Suderman in Berdiansk. That same evening there came a high Russian official (*Staatsminister*) who was a railroad inspector, examining the railways in the region.

He appeared to be a very honorable man, who told us a number of things, including that we should hold off buying land in the “south” where there is more fraud (*Misswachs*). He was well acquainted in the Kursk region where there was land to be had for 80 – 100 Ruble per Disantin. Workers cost 80 – 100 Kopeks per day. We observed around Kursk that the roads are lined with trees just as in Prussia, but there were no ditches. Crops were good, summer-sown plants had sprouted; the fields looked good. We saw our first fruit trees which were in full bloom. In general, there was much attractive regarding nature as we approached Karkow.

Having again traveled through the night first class from Kursk, we arrived in Karkow¹⁹ Thursday morning at 7:00 am. This city is built on several hills, in the middle of which is the new, impressive, not completed train station. Shortly, at 9:00, an extra train would depart for Taganrog. Riding first class we shortly encountered a representative of an English organization that was distributing testaments and Christian literature in 16 languages. He was from the local region, where many Mennonites lived, in whose colony he was well acquainted. Traveling on from Karkow toward Taganrog, the soil is sandy, occasionally with limestone buffs giving way to forested hills and valleys. Eventually forests disappear and fertile rolling steppe emerges and the Russian villages showing good fields. Looking sideways, soon only heaven and earth are seen. As we rode the two-hour journey, progressively the harvest was occurring. Poppy flowers, as in Prussia were everywhere. Approaching Taganrog the soil got worse. On our arrival we hired a porter to take our luggage to the guesthouse. But since the steamer to Berdiansk was about to depart, we went to the counter where our tickets were stamped and, in the name of our Lord, our journey on water was about to begin.

Immediately on boarding, a young man named Wieshern from Graudenz, who had just come from Saratov and was headed toward Molotschna, joined our group. Our journey was going well when after 20 Werst²⁰ we needed to transfer to a larger ship because of the rough water. Crossing the bridge to the other ship was difficult, but the Lord helped us. That same night we had a heavy rain. We were allowed to stay in 2nd class without paying extra. So we arrived in Berdiansk on Saturday, 5:00 and needed to disembark to a small boat that took us to the harbor. We were approach by a man named Dyck, a cousin of Peter and John Wiebe in Prussia, of Heubuden congregation. He offered to take us on his German wagon to friend brother Jansen,²¹ which pleased us greatly. By 6:00 am I was already in an acquaintance’s home. Word of our arrival was sent to elder Leonard Suderman, who came very soon. Still, our arrival was unexpected, in that messages from Prussia indicated a later arrival, whereas we had skipped stops in Poland to explore land possibilities. This had been discussed earlier with the recommendation

¹⁹ Karkiv, now in eastern Ukraine.

²⁰ An old Russian unit of distance, roughly same as 1 kilometer; 1,067 yards (3,500 ft).

²¹ Probably Cornelius Jansen, representative of the Prussian and Mecklenburg Consulate in Berdiansk. See ME III, pp. 91. His name will be spelled with an “s” in subsequent references.

that we do it. Brother Suderman told us that contacts in the colony were already informed of our coming.

We then went into the garden where the elder shortly asked which of us would take over the Sunday sermon. I pointed to Ewert, who agreed to do it. We conversed over many matters. Brother Jansen spoke, as he had the previous year, of whether it would be advisable to send a deputation to America to explore emigration possibilities. Later in the evening old Mr. Suderman came by, as well as our aunt Penner in Elisabeththal. After evening devotions Ewert went home with Suderman; I stayed with Jansen. After our long journey we enjoyed a peaceful night's rest. Immediately after our arrival I telegraphed Koszelitzki in Prussia to inform our family of our safe arrival in Russia.

After the church service I was with friend Brother Claassen who has the gout-suffering wife. Afterwards I was at the church for youth instruction, and for coffee to Suderman, Sr. He asked me if I already knew about the relationship of Ohm Toews and Mariechen Peters. He and others said they had spoken with Toews but it had merely produced a big fight. I decided not to report anything about this marriage to Prussia and any reflections to my wife. I spent the night with Br. Suderman. With Ewert next morning went to Jansen where we were invited by a friend Regier of Purtma to drive to the [Molotschna] colony. He had room for two persons. We declined this generous invitation however in order to keep our deputized group together. Back to Saturday and our arrival in Berdiansk: via Jansen's son, we asked at the consulate whether General Gouveneur Kogboy in was at home in Odessa. The reply came back that he had travelled to Ems and later would be at the southern coast. Thus, no audience with him would be possible. Our intention had been to explore other land possibilities outside the colony between now and the Russian Pentecost, three weeks hence, and afterwards to visit the Caucasus. I wrote to my wife from Cornelius Jansen's.

On May 2 after taking our noon meal, the horses were hitched to the wagon, friend Jansen was herewith sending us to the colony. Friend Regier with young Suderman had driven ahead in the morning. My trip with Ewert went very well. On the way we stopped in the German colony of Stuttgart, inhabited by Wittenberger [Lutherans?]. We took noon meal with them along with the food that Mrs. Jansen had sent along with us. In the evening, we reached Elisabeththal, and brother Ewert continued on to Steinbach to Peter Schmidt. I followed him there the next day to organize our further travels. There I was able to meet with Ohm Toews for several hours' conversation in the garden during which he confided several things to me. I found it difficult to take issue with him, which I did speaking openly—but enough of this matter. Afternoon I was at Martens, married to my cousin, along with several others gathered. Thursday the 26th May our ride went from Cousin Joh Claassen to Jakob Regier, of Pastwa, whose wife is Claassen's daughter, also mother's cousin. This was a Christian home. The village is also good; nowhere in the colony have I seen more trees than here. Next we went to old Ohm Wiebe and toward evening to fellow pastor Johann Wiebe in Rudnerweide. Both are teachers. We stayed overnight at the latter. In the morning after coffee we went to elder Ratzlaff who has retired from his

service, his place having been taken over by elder Görtz of Gnadenfeld. From there we drove to brother-in-law Loewen who has my niece.²² He drove us Friday the 27th to Dirk Wiebe in Lichtfelde where the sisters Mrs. Cornelsen of Rosenort and Mrs. Epp in Lindenau also came. We were affectionately together and closed the evening with a small service, songs, and prayer. Friday evening [at Wiebe's] there were many patients seeking care for broken bones and sprains of whom some needed to stay the night. Among these were the wife of Herman Suderman from Goldschar with her two children whom our friend Abraham Regier took home. In the afternoon I took leave of my dear friends; cousin Wiebe drove me to Cousin Johann Claassen in Elisabeththal where I prepared myself for the sermon in Rudnerweide the next day, Sunday. Next day, the 29th of May, Martens took me to church where first I and then brother Ewert spoke the closing. From there back to Elisabeththal and afternoon to Peter Schmidt in Steinbach. He repeated the counsel to try to speak to a representative of General Gouverneur Kosghoy, even if only to give us a letter of recommendation for the Caucasus trip.

Leaving Johann Klassen after 4:00 we reached Schönsee to Peter Claassen, from there picked up for the night by Ohm Aron Rempel's son-in-law Görtzen—a very Christian household, much favored by the Lord—because the father suffers from cough and chest pain. The daughter also glorifies (*verheilicht*) her suffering—perhaps vertigo (*Schwinsucht*)—because she is so closely bound to her Savior. In my weakness I comforted her heart. She often imagines that she is unworthy of grace. In closing, we all gathered at Jansen's to pray to the Lord. Afternoon I went with Claassen for our departure with brother-in-law Rempel, whose wife is my cousin. We traveled to Fürstenau to Br. Funk, who after coffee took us on to Goldschar. Because of several false turns, it became very late and dark. We came upon the Kourke river and with God's help reached a village, from where a Russian driver finally led us to our destination at L. Sudermann's, where we arrived at midnight. Our hosts had been alerted of our arrival by Regier. We finally lay down to rest at 2:00 am. Next morning after coffee we drove out to the fields where nice rye and flatland where the hay harvest would soon begin, on clean but short grass. The grain was somewhat thin. We saw the sheep herd of over 1,000 head, with as many on rented land. The whole property is 750 Desantines,²³ purchased in three parts. Goldschar is near the village of Blumenfeld where several Janzen's live, said to be related to old Janzen in Saratov. At 4:00 in the afternoon we drove to Brahel where some 15 Mennonite families live. We met the congregational pastor (*Lehrer*) Fast who with 14 neighbors bought the 5,300 Desantin farm for 25 Rubles / dis. two years earlier, including a garden of 7 dis. This friend and his brother told us that their mother is a niece of uncle Claassen in Elisabeththal, and that “big Reimerin” is also a niece of our mother's. Brother Fast's wife is said to be a niece of Wiens in Alexanderthal; she may also be related to us, through a stepson of Peter Regier in Altenau descended from ancestor Wiens. Also, in Brahel live two sisters of the above-named Wiens one of whom is married to an

²² Translated literally, reflects patriarchal structure; in 21st century terms, means “married to”.

²³ Old Russian land unit, *Deysantin*; about a hectare, or 2.2 acres; variously spelled *desantine*, or *dis*.

Esau, and the other to a friend whose name I have forgotten. These and the other declarations of friendship were remarkable on both sides.

We left Brahel at 9:00 Wednesday June 1 driving along the Herza river toward the Nakomal estate, where the Woltsch river begins. The estate, named after its owner, features a big castle (*Schloss*) with many side buildings enclosing both sides of the main castle; the fourth side is an entrance gate centered in high masonry walls. We had tea in the village. The estate includes 16,000 Desatins. Near the already mentioned buildings is mill driven by an elaborate system of multiple streams of water, but now in a dilapidated condition. The soil is reputed to be very good and we drove through considerable grass. Westward about 10 Werst on rough roads is the estate Andrehofke, recently purchased by friend Epp of Fürstenwerder. We arrived there Wednesday at 5:00 in the evening. He purchased it for 30,000 Rubles, 1/6th of which was carried by Inspector Springer who also has a share of the estate. Springer is also a translator, if anything needs to be handled in Russian. The estate is long and narrow, 5 Werst long and 1 7/8s wide. The estate which is 976 dis., has the necessary buildings, including houses for the freed peasants (*freher Leibeigene*) although the wood and adobe buildings are in bad repair. Several workmen were setting up a windmill, purchased from Alexanderovsk. Bricks and wood were being hauled in for workmen to build mills. About 75 head of cattle were grazing on the steppe. There were fewer than 100 sheep, still belonging to the Russians.

On Thursday, Ascension Day, Br. Ewert gave a sermon on Acts, beginning with two hymns and ending with a prayer. In the afternoon we drove in two wagons to the border of L. Epp's farm where especially the rye and the summer crops were doing very well although the wheat was thin. Much of the land had been planted by the Russians, leaving Herr Thiel to gather the harvest to store it in sheds. Friday June 3rd L. Sudermann and his son drove home to Goldschar, and we following him. We steered our course toward Ekatarineslaw. The previous day we had wanted to find a Russian who would drive us the 70 Werst for 13 Rubles. However, as it turned out Brother Epp decided to take us instead. We left at 8:00 am accompanied by tailor Neumann and his son, arriving in the evening at the Bamana river that flows into the Drieger where a ferry would take us across. But there were so many wagons with grain waiting to drive to town that we were obliged to spend the night under the open sky. Thanks to a private ferry we were able to reach the city early the next morning. Arranged by Epp, we made reservations in a Jewish guesthouse, had coffee, and visited the steam mill Hasfe, whose owner was not home. He was to give us connections and insights to purchasing farms and related matters. He was reputed to be knowledgeable about Russian laws. His business partner and brother-in-law Thiessen referred us to merchant Ullmann, a very friendly German whom we asked about farms and land. He immediately referred to his commission book and the availability of the Viglerowka estate of 14,000 Desantines of which 260 is in forest with a distillery and all inventory: 6,000 sheep, 190 horses, 300 head of cattle. This estate is 70 Werste from Karkow. The land is organized into three farms which are for sale at 83 Rubles per Desantin. Ullmann observed that Prince Michael von Tiplis had sent his inspector to check out the land so perhaps he would buy it. So we asked

for other lands in his book that were in the vicinity of Karkow, which were nearer to the Chortitza colony.

In Ekatrinoslaw there is an especially wide street that runs uphill and downhill, bordered by Linden and Acacia trees to provide shade during the heat of the day for those who like to walk. There were also drinking water vessels with cool Selter water which was very delicious. We enjoyed our noon meal in a *Speisehaus* and toward 4:00 we wanted to leave the city for Bergmannsthal with the mail carriage. We wanted to bid farewell to our host, but he was nowhere to be found. So we took leave of tailor Neumann, gave him 10 Rubles to pass on to Epp. Our ride on the post wagon, having been arranged by friend Thiessen in Russian, went very quickly to Bergmannsthal to Warkentine some 30 Wersts away. For this trip of 1 ½ Rations with three horses cost 5 Rubles. After 4 ½ hours we arrived but unfortunately friend Warkentine was not home. They were working on a construction project at their parents' place, at the Old Colony. So we decided to stay anyway, cleaning off the dust that had made the trip so uncomfortable. A girl received us with friendship, showed us our room, and provided us with a meal. We were exhausted from the hectic travel and quite eagerly accepted the night's rest. Near the garden was a small lake where I took my first bath again in Russia. On Sunday June 5th we were still there, and Warkentines were intending to return home so we awaited them. When I awoke on this Lord's Day the sky was clear and it promised to be quite warm. Thinking of the Fatherland, and that it would be Pentecost, we receive a blessing knowing that the Lord will be present in grace through prayer. To wish for peace in Prussia, and for protection on further travels, I held a small morning service. At noon I enjoyed waffles, as in Prussia, and they tasted very good. For dessert I had the same thing we enjoy while traveling, namely buttermilk porridge with cold milk. Afternoon I wrote in my diary, and went into the garden that was all overgrown, with cherry trees growing on the edge of the garden. In my lonely walk I thought of my family back home and what they might be doing. They returned from church in the morning. Coming back inside I lay down on a resting bench, covered myself with the fur coat of the household head that is made of steppen mice fur, and fell asleep. I dreamed that I was at home in my garden when my wife came to me from the garden house. At first, I did not recognize her but as she came nearer we greeted each other. Then she asked what travels awaited us or were yet necessary. I felt that I had spent three weeks in Russia and had come home too early, and that I would have to return again. I then realized that it was a dream.

Warkentins and their son came home as it was getting dark. We greeted each other and spoke about various things. Specifically, the bankruptcy of the unfortunate Gustav Hamm on his 160 Disantin rental farm at Tiegenhof, ten Wersts away, near his friend Cornelson. Warkentin had been there, and Hamm had expressed himself to the effect that his brother was also involved in this sad ownership situation. His wife was to have joined him in the fall. As I said, he is to have left Prussia illegally (*feindlich aus Preuszen gegangen*). So Warkentin wondered "how is it possible to travel without a passport?"

Monday, June 6, we drove out to see the 4,400 desantine field. We came upon grass cutters where 76 men were scything the not very tall grass. Nearby were two reaper machines. We also saw the cooks preparing borscht for the noonday meal. Returning to the homestead we saw many loads of wheat that were to be hauled to Einlage. There was a total of 600 Schetwert sold, with each Schetwert bringing 7 Rubles, 75 Kopeks. According to Warkentin he has 50 all year servants, and 75 household helpers. We took one of these drivers from a wheat wagon who drove us to Chortitza colony. That cost us 2 ½ Rubles.

We left Bergmannsthal right after noon and five hours later reached machine manufacturer Löpp in Chortiz. He came home soon after we arrived, and greeted us warmly with his wife, saying “I am glad that you have come to visit.” In the evening he showed us the new threshing machines being built, which were more rugged compared to those in Prussia. Later I passed on greetings from G.H. Löpp in Tiegenhagen. Then we had a peaceful restful night. This was especially true in that during the day I had suffered from little bugs—they’re called *Moschkes*—that were beginning to bite. Also my eyes were inflamed from the dust, but by morning they seemed better. On the 7th after breakfast, we went to see congregational teacher Ohm Jakob Regier, an uncle once removed (*Vetter Onkel*) of my wife. He was well, had eight married children, and lives with his son Abraham. This uncle is reputed to have a very good memory. He showed us his church books that he keeps in very fine handwriting, with all the registers filled out. He also bragged that in this year elder Gerhard Dyck had performed 284 baptisms in numerous congregations. We enjoyed a noon meal with friend Löpp who then sent us on to Schönwiese with a ready introduction to visit a brother Krahn, who had agreed to see us, and to tell us about farms that were for sale. The crossing of the Dnieper River took a while, but we reached Krahn by early evening. He welcomed us and hosted us for the night. In the morning, he asked us who would lead devotions, so brother Ewert commented on Psalm 1. Before noon we looked up elder Peter Claassen, as well as the wood cutters in Alexanderdrovsk. We stayed another night to be on hand to do the sermon in church. Thursday a driver named Bokk took us to Halbstadt, 75 Werst away. On this journey we drove through the Kankerin estate on the Konske; it too is about to be put up for sale. This is happening because the nobleman who lives there leads a very slovenly life. His indebtedness led him to recently help himself to the royal treasury for 20,000 Rubles to save his 35,000 desantines estate. We had wanted to speak directly to Mr. Kankerin and check into the estate guesthouse. The Jewish host told us that the nobleman does not receive anyone before 10:00 am because he sleeps that late. However, by 12:00 noon he may already be drunk. Br. Ewert and I were uncertain whether to try to see him or not. We decided not to approach him and test our fate, and possibly damage future dealings. We reached Halbstadt at 7:00 in the evening; I stayed the night with cousin Joh. Friesen, while Br. Ewert and Abraham Regier were with Wiens—Rempel’s son-in-law. In the morning we witnessed the feeding of silkworms and the next day visited Willms’ textile factory that was in full operation. Their fabrics were beautiful, very durable, and not very expensive. We saw where wool was washed, combed, woven, and the tools to make yarn, knotting, and decorating with steam. Friday afternoon June 10th we drove to Lindenau with brother-in-law Lapp, who escorted us on to brother-in-law

Cornelson in Rosenort, near where Ewert's brother lived. The evening we drove to elder Toews in Blumenort, who was not at home, and from there to Ewert's sister Hamm in Tiege. When we returned the elder was home and welcomed us warmly. We then discussed the sermon on the first day of Pentecost, determining that Ewert would go to Orloff and I to Lichtenau. So I preached on Good Friday on the Gospel of Lent to a large assembly in a church that seats 1,500 persons. It was said to have been filled for the installation of elder Toews the previous year. Then I rode with the elder whose wife's mother is a friend and niece to the late aunt Claus Regier in Mielenz, Fast in Altenau, and related to the Fieguth family in Gnohau, and friends of Toews' relatives in Prussia. In the afternoon I rested for a while. Then the Ewert brothers picked me up on their way to Blumenstein where the teacher is also the congregational head. A gathering with Bernhard Harder was taking place, in which Harder and Br. Ewert both spoke. I noted two persons who attended, a young man from Niedau, and a Mrs. Hiebert with her husband; she is the daughter of Wall from Bröske. From there we returned to Ewert's sister Ham in Tiege and were joined by Peter Wiebe of Tiege, son of teacher Joh. Wiebe of Rudnerwiede. On the second of Easter br. Ewert and I returned to the church in Lichtenau. Ewert held the opening and the admonition to the youth, for this was to be the day of baptisms in the congregation. After the elder preached on Acts 2: 37-47 he administered baptism to around 80 persons. In the afternoon we discussed the journey to the Caucasus that we would undertake after the holidays, and which comfortable wagon we would ride.

On the second holiday in the afternoon brother-in-law Cornelson drove me to Lichtfelde to cousin Dirk Wiebe's. It was a difficult trip because of the previous night's rain, with lightning, which had hit a house and burned it to the ground. Cousin Wiebe, despite his Friday appointments, some of whom stayed the night, was still at work taking care of patients, with new ones arriving. We had wanted to attend a mission festival that afternoon in Gnadenfeld, but before we were able to leave it was already 1:30, when it began to rain with strong wind from the front. We decided not to go on, since it was already too late, but to turn toward Steinbach and Elisabeththal. In Steinbach there was a letter for Regier; at Martens there was to be one for me. But these latter were not at home which is why I waited at Klassens which made me quite restless.

Here I backtrack a little to the second day of Pentecost when I visited my cousin Johannes Dyck who lives near the church in Lichtenau. I had heard of this long-neglected friend, and so visited him before I attended the service. He is a son of my father's brother Peter Dyck and has a brother Heinrich in Schönau. When I entered his house, I saw that he suffered from extreme poverty and is supported by the congregation. He has a cancerous wound in his face that is expanding. I thought to myself, he is the most miserable and sorry person in my entire relationship. I felt particularly sad about the heartrendingly sad state of his soul. He did not seem to feel a hunger for grace. I gave him some spiritual consolation, and also 10 Rubles.

So, we were all together in Steinbach to discuss the necessary preparations for the trip to the Caucasus. We decided, God willing and us still alive, to depart the next Sunday by steamboat

from Berdiansk. To assist us in dealing with the Russian language, we invited a certain Wiens of Friedensrüh. As guide and accompaniment, we picked fellow pastor Görtz of Steinfeld. Peter Schmidt expected 3 Rubles per day for his contribution to the trip, including lodging and meals, which we of course would need to cover. We also needed to prepare provisions for our trip, including coffee, butter and ham, in the name of our Lord. I left with Martens from Elisabeththal and cousin Löwen toward Berdiansk. At the halfway point, in the village of Stuttgart, we stopped for something to eat. Upon our arrival in the city my friends stayed with Br. Bühler, I at Jakob Suderman's. I might have stayed with Br. Jansen, but friends Reimer and Epps from Schönhorst were already there. The next morning I had the opportunity to greet new immigrants at Jansen's. Their trip had gone well, even 83 year old Grandmother Widow Andres had held up well. We also went to the Bühlers, made some purchases for the journey, regulated our affairs, and gathered at Jansens in the evening, where Br. Ewert offered a fine prayer, and everyone went to their quarters. I was however called back by Br. Jansen who asked me to accompany him to Jakob Suderman's, where the arrival of Mrs. Foth was expected. She is Suderman's daughter.

On the morning of Sunday, June 19, we rushed early to the steamboat to begin our journey. There we were met by all our friends from the colony, from whom I again took leave. Br. Ewert had already processed the tickets (6 Ruble) for first class, no meals, from Berdiansk to Mariapol, Seisk to Taganrog. On this portion of the journey we saw many birds, including big geese or cranes or pelicans (*Kropfgänze*). At the above-named cities where there was no harbor proper, the ship needed to stop a distance from shore because the water wasn't deep enough. In Seisk several of our party went ashore while the rest of us stayed on board, to get a restful six-hour sleep. Travelling further, we arrived in Taganrog at 6:00 Monday morning. We went to a guesthouse, had tea, then went to see a German commissioner whom we had met the night before on the ship. He would provide us with information about available farms. He told us of Wernershof, near the city overlooking the sea, currently owned by a Greek, probably not ready to sell since he lives in very favorable circumstances. Farms or estates from 1,000 to 5,000 Desantins were not readily available. The commissioner's name was Karl Brandt, he held the title "honorary citizen."

Next day we had our noon meal at the guesthouse, it cost us 25 Kopek per person. We lay down for a rest, then toward evening went out to see the house where Czar Alexander died,²⁴ and the royal gardens. Our departure for Rostow was to occur early Tuesday morning, the 21st. but friend Abraham Regier wanted to return to Berdiansk and not continue on to the Caucasus. So Mr. Brandt suggested that his son might show Regier the farm named Bernideke, of 4,500 Desantins, 10 Werst from the city, a site we had already the previous day thought worth seeing. We were eager to continue our journey, so the next morning Regier accompanied us to the train station where we took our leave of each other. We reached Rostow at 11:00 am from where we would continue by coach to Stavropol. Unfortunately, no horses were available. A six horse

²⁴ Of typhus, in 1825, while attending his ill wife in this southern resort town on the Sea of Azov. Alexander I, raised by Catherine the Great, defeated Napoleon's army that had invaded Russia in 1812.

wagon was leaving right then, but we couldn't go with them because it had already been reserved. So, we were obliged to wait until the next day, Wednesday. We paid 14 Ruble 48 Kopeks per person. I note that right after passing Taganrog the grain fields looked very good. After that we saw many limestone cliffs and work sites where the red limestone was cut into big blocks and then used as a building material instead of bricks. Mr. Brandt said that in the wet climate of Taganrog the caves discovered made such lands very advantageous for purchase. There were similar sites near the Volga River at Syritzien where the limestone could be hauled by rail and delivered along the Don River.

The time waiting 24 hours in Rostow and not being able to continue became quite long for us. I bathed in the Don river and took a walk along the bank where there was much going on. A railroad along the river, laden with grain, coal, wood and other products. There were factories nearby too. It had rained a lot in Rostow, roads were muddy. The day we arrived the weather was fair, but it had been raining endlessly the next day. That was not a problem since the carriage in which we were riding was covered. We finally left at 1:00 in the afternoon on Wednesday the 22nd June, in the name of the Lord. Our group was now five persons: elder Ewert, fellow pastor Görzen from Kleinfeld, friend Wiens of Friedensruh, our travel guide and translator, and the young friend Thiem of Kozelitzke who had joined us in the colony, and me, which is six persons. The Diligence in which we were riding²⁵ was a carriage with springs, which we stepped into from the rear. The roof was very beneficial because it rained a lot on this trip. Four to six horses pulled our carriage. There were two porters on the carriage, and the driver, who rode the right-side horse. We drove along the Don River till Aekzei, then across the bridge like over our Nogat river, several Wersts on cobblestone, and then we entered the land of the Don Cossacks.



We drove across a flatland that is under water when the Don floods. In some places it was still muddy. The *Ration* stations were built very nicely in the Russian style and were equipped with everything the traveler desired. As soon as the coach reached a station, the conductor, who was riding with us, jumped down and opened the door—just as he closed it when we departed. It was he who ordered the replacement of the tired horses for fresh ones, so we didn't need to worry that we might not continue traveling. At each station the retiring driver received his 15 Rubles—he would not have forgotten this detail, in any case. The whole experience was very orderly; even the Cossak villages were neat and better appearing than those of the Koßen. The borders of

²⁵ The name of this vehicle appears in the transcription as *Delischangs*. On further research into 19th century carriages and coaches, this term is a Germanization of the Russian rendering of Diligence, the name of a mail and passenger coach originating in England, adopted by France, Germany, Switzerland, and other European regions. The photo shown here is the only rendering of a Diligence I could locate. Sources suggest it was called “diligence” because of the scheduled predictability of government-sponsored coach routes. Here, the Rostow to Sevastopol, and on to the hot spring's spa at Piatagorsk featured the government-sponsored coach route with intermittent stations—*Rations*—for rest stops and horse and crew changes.

the territory of this militaristic people were demarcated at one river crossing with posts. And so we drove from one Ration to the next till we had passed seventeen before we reached the city of Stavropol Saturday at 8:00 in the morning. We had stopped every evening for five hours' rest before continuing at daybreak. The landscape among the Cossacks—thus, in the Caucasus-- is flat, black soft earth, growing abundant grain and pasture.

In Stavropol we had tea and enjoyed our breakfast. Then we went to visit a brother named Neufeld who has left the church and owns and operates an oil mill. In Stavropol he is the only Mennonite, if one can call him that. But he was very friendly and invited us to stay with him, through Sunday till our departure on Monday. We enjoyed our noon meal with him, of familiar Prussian food—potatoes with milk, a delicacy that we had not experienced with the Russians. The fare of the traveler—coffee, tea, buttered bread with meat and cheese—becomes rather tiresome, although it is tasty if the appetite is strong enough. After a rest we went out to the nearest woods that was very thick, with trees heavy with plums, and flowers and bushes. We saw Dutch white clover. Sunday morning friend Neufeld gave a speech. In the afternoon, where Br. Ewert spoke, the entire Neufeld family came, including an elderly mother, the wife and her brother, children and in-laws.

In the late afternoon we went to a commissioner who was somewhat fluent in German who mentioned several available farms in the Caucasus region. We went with him to a field surveyor who spoke to us in Russian and was dressed in Cossak clothing. He showed us a map of the farms. On our way back we stopped at the royal garden that was crowded with visitors. It featured very tall trees and some very beautiful wild plants. In the evening we enjoyed a meal.

Next morning after coffee we were joined by a German from Johannesburg whom we had asked to accompany us to Pyatigorsk. His going as far as Hoschnekoep would cost us 45 Rubles. Before leaving we were finally invited to see the Governor who wanted to talk to us about the purchase of his 3,600 Desantines of land located halfway to Rostow. Wiens and Görzen accompanied us to visit this man, who was very friendly and gave us information on the land, that it was fertile dark black soil, and so forth. He added that there was to be a railroad nearby, but that construction had not yet begun. We left the city on Monday the 27th of June at 9:30 am for Pyatigorsk.

After seeing good soil initially, by evening as we stopped for night lodging the surroundings had become very dry, the mountains and valleys unproductive. Our night in a village was not restful, since we had borrowed our driver's fur coat as a blanket and were covered with fleas the next morning. In the morning we traveled 40 Wersts to the first Ration and reached Alexandrovsk. On this stretch we saw sharp rocks reaching up at a mountain peak, and beyond that the famed "camel's back" mountain, and beyond that a snow-capped peak barely visible through a cloud cover. At this ration at 9:30 am we ate breakfast. Here we saw steppe grass unlike anything we had seen in Russia, and very fertile soil comparable to our best. Here anyone is free to cultivate land wherever they wish, and harvest what they have sown. The nearby Cossak villages were

clean and neat. Some years ago the area had been inhabited by the Charkußen who were eventually defeated by the Russians. At 3:00 pm we stopped at a Ration where our lunch consisted of tasty milk, along with bread and butter with cheese. Tuesday evening, we reached two Rations away from Pyatigorsk, and departed at 3:00 am and saw very fine streams, hay and grass. To our side we saw the so-called Snake Mountains, Camel's Mountain and Sueksberg, and beyond that 120 Wersts two days' drive away, the 17,000 ft. Mount Elbrus that is always snowcapped. Finally at noon on the 29th of June we reached Abraham Schmidt's in Pyatigorsk. Neither the man of the house nor his wife was at home, although they came in the evening. We rode into the city with him and looked up a friend named Lange who was formerly a private tutor but is now a photographer. These brothers—Schmidts and Lange—are members of the Templar movement (*Jerusalems Freunde*).

We visited the hot baths outside of the city where springs come out of a cliff as if from a pump, with sulfur foaming out of the water as a green crust on the basin edge, and over still water. I put my hand into the hot water to test it. We went into a tunnel about sixty steps into the stone cliff, at the end of which was a big room with an opening to the sky. Half of this room was a flat stone, the other half a deep bathing pool. The opening to the sky was about 50 ft. up, open like an upside-down funnel. A guard stood at the entrance to this space, because, as we were told, some time ago a child had drowned in this sulfur-rich water. This spring extended along a crevice in the mountainside to where the spa guesthouse is located. We decided to take a bath ourselves but arriving there at 8:00 pm were told it was too late. We then returned to Lange's home and were honorably hosted. Lange's wife is of German Protestant extraction; we assume that they have a mixed marriage (*das sie gemischter Ehe leben*). When we returned to our lodging the Schmidts were already home. Schmidt is the son of Nikolaus Schmidt, an elder in their church community. Next morning after coffee we went into his 3 ½ disantine garden where fine cherries were not yet ripe. Then we returned to the hot springs to bathe, but all the places had been taken up. So we went back to Lange and saw his photography. Then we saw a stone formation, had another meal with Schmidts consisting of all sorts of foods all of which tasted good.

On June 30 we left on our long journey back from this distant place. Friend Schmidt accompanied us on this rather warm day. We drove to see his farm near Mount Camel. He has a Russian house there, a big sheep barn, and a solid rock wall fence surrounding everything. He has 1,000 Disantin land, and his father another 1,500, all of which is rented out. We had tea after we arrived at the farm. Our travel group, except for Wiens and me, were eager to take a hike up Mount Camel, which would take about 1 ½ hours. So Ewert, Görtzen and friend Theim climbed the mountain, went into the camel's neck, then walked along the camel's back. They walked along Schmidt's 200 desantin pasture near the camel's back; it is very fine for grazing and, equal to anything we have in Prussia. This land has been leased for 30 years.

In the evening we drove to Tempelhof, a colony of the *Jerusalemsfreunde*, or Templars as they call themselves. Abraham Schmidt had accompanied us this far. We reached the home of a

certain Lange, a son of teacher Lange who had been in Prussia and became an elder in Russia. This son was born in Bröskefelder in 1836. Overnight I stayed with a friend Dyck, a single young man whose sister is the wife of elder Lange. This young man journeyed to Palestine with young Claas Schmidt who would return from there in the fall. The evening we arrived in this colony I went to bathe in the nearby Kumme river and when I returned several gathered and we held a conversation for a while. However, the mountain climbers were tired and went to bed. In the morning we woke to begin our journey. After coffee a neighbor came by. His son had studied medicine in Germany but had to quit because of the father's lack of funds. The father asked me if I knew anything about his son. I told him that as far as I knew he was living in Marienburg. As we drove away with old man Schmidt accompanying us, we saw his fields, very nice grain and grassland. In answer to my question of whether they had everything they desired in their living situation, he replied that yes, they were satisfied with everything, except for a shortage of money. The reason for that was the long distance between their grain fields and the market, which also lowered the value of the sales by half in Berdiansk.

We drove downhill onto flatland where the grass was less good. Around 9:00 in the morning we saw the snowcapped peak of Mount Elbrus one more time as the sun shined on it brightly. On this high steppe we were enchanted by its nature, including the enjoyment of the many wild strawberries we found alongside the road. Around 4:00 in the afternoon we emerged onto the high plateau out of the valley bordered on both sides by mountain ranges. We dammed a stream flowing from a spring to provide ourselves with drinking water, and so that the horses could drink their fill. We drove on slowly until we came to the highest point of the plateau-steppe and continued till evening. All around us we could see the small fires of workers cooking their evening meals. During a small rainstorm it became so dark that we needed to turn around and seek shelter in a hay shed where we stayed the night. At 2:00 am the driver came to us and declared "my horses are gone!" After several searches he found them. Horse thieving is something we all fear in Russia, it occurs rather often. Here on the high steppe we saw very good rye and pasture. Finally, we drove downhill and at a cliff in a cove we found a spring and we all had a good drink. Shortly we reached the Kuban River which we crossed on a wooden bridge, but even before we ate breakfast, I bathed there with friend Klumm. Seven Wersts beyond the bridge we reached our Kuban brothers who had left the church (*ausgetretenen Brüdern am Kuban*). In external appearances these brethren, like the *Jerusalemsfreunde*, all wear the Janzen beard—with the exception of their elder and teacher of the Word Nikolaus Schmidt. They arrived here with few means, but they now have quite substantial houses. The settlement has two villages. They have large sheep herds, their construction wood comes either from the Caucasus forests or from Rostow 300 Wersts away. One brother brings wheat to Rostow and brings back lumber, a trip that requires three weeks. We arrived to these brethren at 10:00 carrying a portion of fish from the Kuban river near Nowinken which was immediately cooked and eaten with satisfaction. This occurred at the home of a certain Berg, a cousin to Riesen married to Wiens. This community is of the same perspective as Neufeld in Stawropol, who is also the person who represents them, and purchases produce from them; the entire group

belong to the “Jumpers” (*Springern*) or “the joyful ones” (*Froeliche genannt*). We spoke little about faith matters with them, but they are in any case not as narrow-minded (*Eng herzig*) as they used to be.

After three hours. About 1:00 in the afternoon, we continued our journey. At 7:00 in the evening we reached a Cossak village where we spent the night. We feared continuing lest we would need to spend the night in a Circassian village. These Circassians are a distinct tribe that was conquered by the Russians. Even more terrifying are the Kalmyks whom we met living in their tents in the mountains above Pyatigorsk. Their facial features are similar to the Circassians, with a wide face, small nose, almost no eyelids, sharp little eyes and a low brow. They had just butchered a sheep whose meat was very rank, perhaps it had already been dead. In any case we lay down to rest and were sleeping soundly when around 2:00 we were awakened in the Russian house where we had our luggage. Outside there was such a tumult and a pig was screaming. So we rushed out to see what was going on and saw that a wolf had snatched the pig from the porch in the dark of the night and was running off with it. The owner, who had been sleeping on the porch, said that this was the second pig the wolf had taken.

We left this village and continued our travel at 3:00 am and reached the Urup River where it flows into the Kuban. We drove through the first stream in two feet of water. On July 3rd, a Sunday, at 8:00 am we reached the little town of Brösehnep at the Kuban River bridge. We ate breakfast in a guesthouse but could not take the time for Sunday rest and devotions because we needed the day to travel so as to reach Taganrog to catch the steamer on Friday, and to inspect 6,000 Desantin of land that lay 10 Wersts out of our way. We were back at Brösehnep at 5:00, had tea, and in the evening went to see the old, very tall, half demolished bridge over the Kuban. Alongside it was a floating bridge now in use. Two buffalo cows were being herded across the river, not for the first time since they soon reached the other bank. Brother Ewert had been sick this day, but on Monday morning we departed at 2:00 am toward Stawropol. We had offered our driver an extra 6 Rubles for this drive and the previous day’s travel, to be paid at the Stawropol. We drove 42 Wersts to the first Ration where we had our breakfast. 30 Wersts remained, the most difficult of the trip that took us 6 hours. Soon we were climbing up a steep mountain road, up step-like switchback curves, across a chain of peaks. The horses were working so hard to manage the steep roads that our travel companions got off and walked to make it easier for the horses. While ascending the mountain we stopped for a delicious drink at a spring beside the road. Finally, we reached the high steppe that extended to Stawropol. Good vegetation grew in this landscape. When we reached our destination for the day, we went to the *comtoir* and turned in the Diligence-carriage to continue our journey on to Rostow as soon as possible. We carried our luggage to our guesthouse rooms, ate a noon meal, and paid the driver 81 Rubles. We rested an hour and went to the agent who would help us with our continuing journey. But he was nowhere to be found. These Russians take so long! So we decided not to continue that same day. Meanwhile it had begun to rain again, with lightning and thunder, so after the storm passed, we had a good night’s rest. In the morning at 4:00 am our companions

were hard to rouse, but we left for Rostow. At the first Ration we had wanted to examine the lands of the Governor of Stawropol, but because Br. Ewert was sick and the land would probably not be for sale in the next year, we decided to leave it be, and continue our journey. On that day's travel from 4:00 am until 10:00 pm we had gone 167 Wersts through six stations. We were still 173 Wersts from Rostow. One unusual episode on this day's travel was that a camel striding across the landscape crossed our path. Another noteworthy episode was that on the previous day as we were eating our noon meal at a station, colleague Thiem realized that he had left his purse with 12 Rubles in it at the previous station. Immediately we found a driver who returned with him to the previous station, where he found his purse. This cost us 3 ½ hours time, and him 1 Ruble 30 kopeks paid to the driver. We drove through the last night non-stop to improve our chances of reaching the steamer. The road was very dusty, so we became increasingly uncomfortable, especially during the warm daytime. At 8:00 am we came to a small town and crossed a bridge over the Don River. We were on pavement that ascended steeply, and the horses would not continue. Eventually the driver persuaded them to make the ascent. With some effort we reached the next Ration where the horses were changed. With jubilation we checked into a Jewish guesthouse in Rostow, and after we had cleaned off the dust, celebrated having achieved our long and difficult journey. We enjoyed a noon meal. My travel companions went out to see the town, while I stayed behind.

Shortly I was visited by brother Nikolaus Schmidt from the Caucasus with whom I went to visit the iron smelting factory (*Eisengiesserei*) owned by an Englishman. There we met a Mennonite friend named Günther who, like Schmidt, leased land in the Caucasus. Both were in Rostow selling their wool. These brothers advised against purchase of land in the Caucasus because the situation is still too "young" and that leasing would be more advisable while getting better acquainted with the place. Income from wool and grain will remain depressed until there is a railroad to carry it to market.

We departed by train from Rostow Friday July 8 at 6:00 am and reached Taganrog after 3 ½ hours. Immediately on arrival we hired a driver to take our luggage to the boat, while we then went to a guesthouse and took turns eating our noon meal. Then we boarded the ship. Shortly a young man named Claassen of Kaldowe in Prussia approached me claiming he knew me although he did not know where I was from. He said that he had accompanied Reimers. Near him stood a young Friesen who had also come from Prussia and was returning home to Molotschna. This latter person told me that he had greetings from my wife and that he had been there in Tiege the day before our departure. Our trip on the Sea of Azov went well until, in the evening, the wind grew ever stronger. We had taken second class without seats, so we had to sleep on the floor. We arrived in Berdiansk at 6:00 in the morning and saw one of the Reimers of Schönhorst awaiting their passenger and luggage. We went with the young Reimer to the city to brother Jansen's place where we had breakfast. Soon thereafter L. Sudermann arrived and asked us how our trip to the Caucasus had gone. Saturday the 9th of July, we took leave of Br. Claassen and the second elder Br. Sudermann. At noon we went with Reimers' wagon, except Ewert, but with

Abraham Regier, we were our whole team including young Thiem, toward the Molotschna colony. I had asked Br. Sudermann if he knew of any communion services occurring this Sunday in the colony. He didn't know for certain, but thought there might be such a service at Halbstadt or Petershagen. When I reached Elisabeththal at 10:00 I considered the 35 Werst, all night and morning driving, the weariness it would occasion, and decided to forego the trip. This was perhaps the Lord's will and may it bless me accordingly and grant me a spirit of grace and prayerful acceptance. I stayed the night with cousin Claassen and in the morning accompanied brother-in-law Martens to worship service in the school where fellow pastor Dyck of Pordenau gave the sermon on the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus, and other aspects of the gospel, speaking slowly and clearly without much reading from the text. In the afternoon several neighbors came to Martens. Monday morning we drove to the steppe and looked at grain fields which were in better condition than last year. From the fields we went directly to cousin uncle David Wiens where we enjoyed a noon meal. Afternoon to fellow pastor Esau whose first wife was the daughter of Franz Regehr, whose father was my wife's cousin. At 6:00 pm we drove to Steinbach where I wanted to meet with Brother Ewert, but he wasn't there, so I went to Jakob Schmidts. Then I drove to Martens in Steinbach where I found a very fine letter from my wife. It is always good to receive news from home.

Morning of Tuesday, July 12, we had coffee with friend Epp in Elisabeththal, a neighbor who has a wife who is Peter Dyck's daughter. The father is a cousin to Uncle Dyck in Neuteich. Seventeen years ago, they married as widow and widower. Both brought children from their first marriages, of which three couples have married from among these children, one of which lives with the parents. A brother of mother Epp, named Peter Dyck from Gruppe, came by and all gave greetings to pass on to the uncles. Shortly before noon I drove to Peter Schmidt and afternoon went with their family to B. Görtzen where I found brother Ewert. We discussed our forthcoming travel. I went with cousin Johannes Claassen to Dirk Wiebe in Lichtfelde where I spent the night. He gave me several photographs to take along. He has many patients at his place including an 8 year old boy who tore open the side of his mouth that needed to be sewn back together with thread. On the 13th I drove with Regehr to Halbstadt to recent immigrants Reimers and Epps where I found old Mr. Reimer at home with all the women. Two sons had driven to Fürstenau. The third son had accompanied friend Epp to the Caucasus along the sea to inspect land. At 1:00 pm I drove with cousin Wiebe to Lindenau to brother-in-law Epp where we spent the night. This visit was precious to me because previously I could only stay a short while. After an afternoon rest, we drove to brother-in-law Cornelsen in Rosenort to have coffee with brother Ewert who was staying with his brother. We discussed our upcoming trip. At this very place was brother-in-law Martin Hamm of Tiege who had come from Prussia a few weeks earlier and related news from the Werder, among brothers with whom I am familiar. Hamm related a story of a recent experience between pastors in the Fürstenwerder congregation. A servant of the Word was invited to join a colleague. When he comes to the place of meeting, he is astounded to see three men playing cards. He stands at the door and looks at the others and

thinks: “What has my friend led me into?” This was how Hamm was drawn into a picture of what it means to be a Servant in today’s Prussia.

From Rosenort we drove in the evening to Altenau to P. Regier where we stayed the night. The next day brother Ewert joined me at my wife’s cousin Johannes Regier. Friday afternoon our journey continued to Jakob Martens at Menteich. We had rented a Bechler carriage from H. Mathiel a brother-in-law of Mrs. Wall (*Wällms*) in Tiege, Prussia. He said he also wanted to visit Prussia and had already saved 1,500 Rubles for that purpose. Arriving at Martens was for me coming to familiar acquaintances. The buildings are all well finished, there is a fine new garden with many cherry trees. In the main yard near the garden there was a system of pipes whereby water from the roofs was stored underground. We asked Martens to help us get to Brodsk. At 5:00 pm Martens took us there in a carriage with three horses. Herr Dyck was not at home in Brodsk, but the sons were all there as well as teacher Franz with whom we visited. We continued conversing on multiple topics until nearly midnight, when we had a good rest. I developed a cough from the quick shift from hot daytime to sitting outside in the cool evening. In the morning we went into the garden and then on to teacher Franz’s house, to examine his fine large classrooms and living room. He showed us a map of Palestine, the writing and notebooks of the students. For our noon meal we enjoyed *Flinzen* with cherry sauce—excellent! Then old Mr. Dyck made his appearance with his eldest son. They had just made a trip to inspect a farm that the owner wished to lease. Dyck had agreed in principle but asked for a 10-day grace period to make a final decision. We stayed in Brodsk through Saturday July 16. The Dyck estate is an impressive *ökonomie* with many buildings all decked out with bright sand-colored tiles. Seventeen heavy-duty iron-axled wagons and many smaller wagons were on hand to bring in the harvest and to travel around on. I, however, saw very little livestock. This family, so blessed with land, has 10 living children the youngest of whom is six weeks old. The wife is a sister to Peter Schmidt of Steinbach. After supper at 10:00 pm we took our leave because it was getting dark, without moonlight. Earlier in the afternoon winds whipped up dust so that driving across the steppe one could get lost. I had asked Mrs. Dyck to give me a little butter for the trip, but this generous woman gave me much more: bakery and a fried meal. We travelled till 2:00 in the night, protected by our competent driver Mr. Fast, who is a landless renter (*Anwohner*) of Dycks, with 40 desantines and accommodations. He pays his rent in harvests and service. He told us many things on the way to the harbor.

At 10:00 am we boarded the ship to Cherson and Odessa. I note that from Brodsk on I traveled exclusively with brother Ewert. Friend Abraham Regier stayed behind to spend more time in Russia, to learn the Russian language and to become better acquainted with, and experienced in, the practice of how the Russian economy operates.²⁶ We, in contrast, wanted to return home to our fatherland, along the way making a few more contacts to fulfill our mission to inform others in

²⁶ Abraham Regier Jr. would spend two years in Russia before returning to Prussia, where he married Peter Dyck’s daughter Catherine, his first cousin. Their daughter, Agathe Marie, born in 1875, was two years old when they emigrated to America in 1877.

Prussia who wished to settle in Russia, although in a letter from my wife I learned that so far no one had openly expressed their intentions to do so. At 6:00 am we arrived in the village of Lypithihna on the Dnieper, now 65 Wersts from Brodsk. We stopped for coffee at a Jewish guesthouse, and continued to wait for the steamer, which then arrived two hours later. We boarded the ship, handed over our tickets for passage to Cherson without table—2 Rubles per person. We enjoyed a midday meal on the ship (for 1 Ruble each). It was Sunday July 17. We were pleased to withdraw into the quiet, to observe the Lord's Day in our humility.

When traveling, it is so difficult to collect one's thoughts, a disturbance on a ship is all the greater for the traveler. We came to a small town where there was a great commotion. A machine driven by a steam engine was lifting logs out of the water onto a boat. Later we reached the town of Bereslaw where a floating bridge over the Dnieper needed to be opened to allow us to pass through. This is also where the telegraph line goes through. And so we traveled through beautiful nature with tall trees and meadows on one bank, many German houses against the hills on the other bank. The Dnieper became ever wider as we approached Cherson, almost equal to our Vistula.

On this section of our trip we met a young Abraham Friesen, Mrs. Cornelius Jansen's nephew. He is the chief inspector of colonies for the Tauride Gouvernement. He told us that he was traveling to Nikopol and intended to visit the Molotschna colony. He said that if the colony has not yet found the funds to buy more land for the landless, who should have 80 dessantines each household, then they should be forced to do so. Brother Ewert countered with a note of caution, suggesting that the colony did not have as many funds as was supposed. The inspector replied that a decree would be issued by higher authorities to order such transactions or payments. The landless would be provided first from a village's common properties, then from the field roads and unused wild areas, and finally from newly purchased land.

When we reached Cherson on Sunday evening it was quite dark, so we were allowed to stay on board. But when morning came we hurried to transfer our luggage to another larger ship that was headed to Odessa. The evening before brother Ewert had informed me of the sad news that France had declared war on our Fatherland. This caused us great anxiety, even more when it was confirmed from several additional sources. After we had transferred our things to the other ship we intended to go into the city for coffee, but it was still too early. So we had coffee on the ship, which was rather expensive and not very enjoyable. The inspector joined us again and brother Ewert asked him if he had heard any news from abroad. He had not, but he thought that this war rumor could be proven untrue if later information became available. It was hard to believe that it could have just "fallen from heaven" without there being anything behind it. We so wished that

it would be declared untrue. But we quickly changed our route home to avoid traveling through Poland.²⁷

Monday July 18, we made our trip to Odessa, ate our noon meal at Tabeldo for 1 Ruble per person just as the previous day, then lay down for our last Black Sea nap. Ewert again had fever. As we neared the city I woke him to prepare to disembark and to go to the Hotel Europa. A driver took us there for 60 Kopeks. It was the same guesthouse where I stayed the previous year, with the same management. We took a room, 1 ½ Rubles for 2 hours. During this nap I had a dream in which I was already home giving a sermon. This dream caused me much longing to be with my family again. Monday at 6 pm we were again in the guesthouse, Ewert still had fever and I was writing in my diary. At 7 pm I woke Ewert and we drove to a certain Jakob Töws who had been recommended to us by Peter Schmidt, to seek advice on approaching the Gouverneur regarding our mission of immigration from Prussia. In the case of his absence we would seek to address his secretary Chief Excellency Mr. Otwarstein. Töws received us graciously and advised us, as had Philip Wiebe, to first contact President Sr. Excellenz Herrn Ottinger, who is the secretary of the Guardians' Committee (*Fürsorge Komität*).²⁸ Through him we would be able to request an audience with His Excellency the Kanzelei Head even if only in writing. Brother Ewert had already filled out a form with a list of requests to be presented to Gouverneur Berg, in as brief a formulation as possible. We prayed to God, Lord of Lords, to give us, and especially brother Ewert, the wisdom to deal with the pressure that our Fatherland has brought upon us. We engaged a *druschke* carriage and drove to the headquarters of the Guardians' Committee to request an audience with President and States Council Prince Ottinger. We shortly entered his presence and through brother Ewert our petition was presented, as follows.

We the deputies of the Prussian Mennonites come before you concerning the pressure that we have experienced regarding military conscription, of which your Excellency is aware, to seek immigration to Russia and to purchase land, preferably in southern Russia.

Brother Ewert added that a deputation had already presented a similar petition to General Gouverneur Prince Roszebay in Petersburg. His Excellency responded that freedom from Russian military service was no obstacle to the proposal. However, as he had witnessed in the Volga colonies which he had visited three years earlier, a monetary substitute to military service had been instituted. Then he recommended to us that we, in order to purchase land from the Ekatherinenslaw Gouvernment, address ourselves to the Russian Envoy in Berlin regarding which governmental region would invite us to settle. He also asked us if we had obtained permission from the Prussian government to emigrate. We answered with a "Yes" and expressed

²⁷ Presumably because Polish territory, as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, would have been allied with France against Prussia.

²⁸ Agency established by the Russian government to oversee and coordinate foreign colonists. In 1870 its main office was in Odessa. It was abolished in 1871 when colonists of all foreign nationalities became Russian citizens subject to general laws and privileges. *Mennonite Encyclopedia* II, p. 426.

the assurance that the Prussian and Russian governments would come to an agreement on our behalf-- release from Prussia and acceptance in Russia. However in the case that someone with a passport but without release from Prussia buys land in Russia, that party remains subject to Prussian laws. Purchase of land in Russia is allowed to those who have a residence permit but are not citizens. Such a permit must be renewed each year and costs 2 Rubles. States Councillor Prince Ottinger continued with the following: Perhaps it would be best if you contact the Russian Embassy (Ministerium) where a trustworthy contact person could represent your interests to the Crown and follow up on matters so that they are not forgotten and thus delayed indefinitely.

We left Odessa Tuesday evening July 19 at 6:00 pm by train for Kyiv riding 2nd class for 13 Rubles 88 Kopek per person. We went to Tiraspol and then turned right toward Kyiv. We passed through forests of vigorous deciduous trees as well as wheat and rye fields, as well as fruit trees such as Spanish cherries in the villages. In the afternoon of Wednesday July 20th we encountered free-standing German-type houses not in villages. Brother Ewert knew that in this region a group of German speakers from Switzerland had come here about 30 years earlier on the estate of a nobleman, bought land, and settled. The buildings were long, including a house, barn, and shed under one roof, some in L-shaped form. They all had a well in the middle of the yard with a crank to draw up water. Grain fields and gardens in these settlements looked very good.

We arrived in Kyiv Wednesday evening at 9:00 and needed to spend the night here because we would continue in 3rd class. We took a Droschke to a guesthouse which was a Jewish Halal business. Here we enjoyed our evening meal, while outside the rain was pouring down with strong lightning and thunder. When the storm cleared, we lay down to a comfortable night's rest after a 27-hour train ride. After breakfast next morning we had two assignments: to get our passports stamped, and to exchange Prussian bank notes into Russian money to pay our bills till we reached the Prussian border. I took the second task; found a Jewish merchant who took 10 Thaler banknotes in exchange for 9 Rubles. The reason for this unfavorable exchange rate was the war's outbreak between France and Prussia, and the decline in the value of the Prussian banknotes. Meanwhile Ewert had taken care of the passports.

We made our way to the train station where our train was to leave at noon for Kursk and Orel. To backtrack to the previous day, before we got to the German settlement, we passed the estate of Berdischew which lay some distance beyond. It is a large estate, like a small city. Because the nobility (*Grafschaft*) there is heavily indebted the estate is listed for auction in a few months. The landscape around Kyiv featured fine deciduous and fir trees, but afterwards the soil became lighter even sandier, with forests of fir and spruce. This was the first time we saw trees similar to those in south Russia. After the small city of Nezhin the main roads are lined with trees like in Prussia. At daybreak of the morning of 22 July we approached Kursk. The grain harvest was in full swing with its yield in plain sight on the fields. There was also evidence of fields of buckwheat and hemp and of the bountiful harvest that had taken place. We reached Kursk at 6:00 pm. There is much traffic here, no doubt due to the rich soil. We had already gotten our tickets checked through to Orel while in Kyiv, so we could continue our journey at 7:00 pm.

I write a brief note here regarding the fields from Odessa on, fields of ripe rye that stretched as far as the eye could see but with hardly any workmen to be seen, with binder or sickle to harvest it. Such evidence of the Russian national character! One works only when forced to do so. When summer seeding is done too late to expect anything from it. But the hope of a grain harvest will not motivate him to cut it in time for it to yield well if he doesn't begin in a timely fashion. Perhaps some landowners find it difficult to pay the workers. That may be why pay rates are so low in middle Russia. Our friends in the colony prefer to pay higher wages to be assured that the harvest will indeed provide the yield expected.

We reached Orel Friday afternoon 2:00. We needed to wait till evening to continue. The train to Dñneburg was to leave at 9:00 pm. But we didn't leave until early Sunday morning, so we would spend one day and two nights on this stretch. The previous day around noon we passed through the city of Smolensk and saw the fine gardens on the south side of the mountains. We passed through the tunnels of Vilna and Kowno, where the sudden entrance to a tunnel would shock the passengers to silence, soon to emerge again into the bright daylight. Approaching the border we saw fine estates and grain fields which had the effect of us feeling welcomed. We reached the Prussian border at Werballen²⁹ Sunday evening 8:00 the 24th of July. Our passports were taken several stations earlier, checked, and then returned when the train stopped at the border. At Dñneburg we were joined on the train by young men traveling to Prussia who had been drafted or had volunteered for military service in the war against France. As the train crossed to border into Prussia they were shouting for joy and voicing obscenities in their godless emotions. They showed little regard for what might contribute to peace between nations. Nor did they seem to consider what awaited them, life or death. But as we continued from the border, we saw other soldiers taking leave of their wives, children, and siblings. As we passed Elbing a father said, "Give me one more glimpse of my child." Tears were flowing on both sides, those leaving and those left behind. The mood was quite heavy, in that they did not know if they would ever see one another again in this life.

We reached Marienburg at 8:00 am Monday the 25th of July and on to Sandhof, Herrenhagen, and Tiege. Thanks be to God.

Peter Dyck.

²⁹ Verbalin, Lithuania.

"Emigration to America 1876" by Grandfather Peter Dyck

Copy by Agathe M. Janzen

We—I, Peter Dyck of Tiege near Tiegenhof, Marienburg in West Prussia, longtime our place of residence, with my wife Agathe born Regier, along with five children and two sons-in-law, emigrated in the year 1876. The children were Anna, Marie married to Bernhard Regier, Agathe married to Jakob W. Regier, and sons Peter and Johannes. The day of our departure was June 15, and the place was Simonsdorf, a station on the railroad between Marienburg and Dirschau. We were part of a group of 118 persons who were leaving, of whom 92 would board the S.S. Rhein as 2nd class passengers, the remainder who would travel "tween deck." Our departure at 7 am on that morning was accompanied by heavy rain, so the large crowd of relatives and friends gathered to bade us farewell got wet. Yet the outpouring of well-wishes did our hearts good. The farewells were difficult, knowing that those leaving were going to such a distant place, many would possibly never see each other again. So, leave was taken by parents from children, and from brothers, sisters, friends and acquaintances. Some among the remaining hoped to join their loved ones the next year. Others, who had broken their commitment (*Bekennnisbruch*) to non-resistance and had accepted military service, bade their relatives farewell forever.

We, in the name of God, and in our witness as Mennonites, and our reformer Menno Simons, we wished to remain true to our faith before our Lord, and to remain true to our consciences. Under pressure from the government to send our youth into military service, we had no alternative but to leave our fatherland and seek life in a place on earth where we will have freedom of conscience. So, we have sold our earthly possessions, and chose America in the hope that the Lord will go with us and guide us on water and over land. Four married children stayed behind in the Fatherland, in the hope of joining us soon. Taking an extra train, we departed from Simonsdorf to Wirschau, then via Gerk to Konitz, Schneidenmühl, Krentz, Landsberg and Berlin. We reached Berlin, our capital, at 8:00 pm. The entire group was well up to this point, except for



the inconvenience of not having access to our suitcases and needing to stay back in the passenger cars for five to six hours at a time. This treatment by the authorities left us with an unsatisfactory departing impression of our Fatherland. We continued our journey by train the night through, reaching Bremen at 4:00 am, after 21 hours of travel since leaving Simonsdorf. We were met in Bremen by a guesthouse driver named Jüning Hatel. The other passengers were lodged elsewhere in the same street. Our driver was an agent of North German Lloyd. The next morning at 10:00 he invited us to a bureau where we needed to identify the ages of each family member. At 2:00 afternoon we attended to the billing of our freight and our passenger tickets. The cost for me and my family of five individuals was 9345 Marks. In the afternoon of the same day our guesthouse host accompanied us to an outlook in a park and on our way back we exchanged Prussian money for dollars at the rate of 3.75 Mark for 1\$. Next morning, Saturday June 17, we went into the city to do some shopping. Then at 9:00 we travelled to Bremerhafen, accompanied by the children who were staying but were sending us off: Jakob and Bernhard Entz and brother-in-law Regier, the father of our sons-in-law, and some other people. They accompanied us right up to the colossal ship S.S. Rhein, of the Bremer Line. The final hour of separation came at 3:00 when our dear relatives took their leave. *Ach*, it was for all of us a heavy hour. However, we hoped in our hearts that they would join us the following year, the Lord willing. It is much more difficult to take leave when brothers and relatives are not in accord with each other in their hearts. The Rhein took us away from Bremerhafen at 4:00 in the afternoon. We could see our friends on the shore and could give our final farewell hand-waves (*letzte Lebewohl begrüsten*), until we could no longer see each other.

We ask our Lord, who “neither slumbers nor sleeps” to protect us, and to comfort us when we are anxious, so that we do not give up knowing that when the Lord is with us, we are spared from all harm. We commit ourselves to His caring hands and go forth onto the vast ocean, the wind and the water, in His name.

After we lost sight of land on both sides, there was little wind. We traveled in a northwesterly direction into the night. But by Sunday morning we awakened to wind and rain. The waves were 10 feet high and 10 feet apart. After a while the wind calmed down so that during the day with a clear sky we had little wave action; we travelled forward easily.

Now that it was Sunday and the Lord’s Day, several hearts were moved, mine included, to take up the responsibility, as the only one in our group, to address the Word in a spiritual manner. The question arose, how to proceed, to get permission from the ship’s authority, to hold a service. So, I contacted the Capitan and asked him for permission to allow it. His reply? From his perspective it could happen. But permission would need to come from the head of the Dining Room staff, so that they could withdraw and accommodate a worship service. It was now 11:00 am so the passengers were immediately invited to come to the Dining Room. So the service began with the singing of a hymn. I then announced the appropriate comments for the introduction of a service, followed by a prayer. Thus I address the feelings of our inner persons before the face of our God and savior. First, gratitude that he has brought us this far; and hope

064

Rhein

07 / 01 / 1876

Bremen/New York

HARDER	Bernhard	64	farmer		Elise	5	
	Justine	40			Maria	2	
	Gustav	20		THIMM	Elisabeth	60	
	Bernhard	11			Elisabeth	28	
	Johann	22	farmer		Margretha	24	
	Maria	22			Agatha	23	
PENNER	Justine	78			Heinrich	21	
ANDREAS	Jacob	58	farmer		Franz	30	
	Maria	52			Catharina	27	
	Catherina	26			Elizabeth	?	
	Maria	24		FRANZ	Catharina	60	
	Anette	20			Johann	24	
	Emilie	14		GOOSSEN	Johann	74	
	Margretha	10		FAST	Agatha	35	
	Elise	6		FAST	Gerhard	37	farmer
REGIER	Gerhard	54	farmer		Justina	35	wife
	Anna	52		REMPEL	?	65	farmer
	Helena	19			Justina	65	wife
	Gerhard	18		ISAAK	Jacob	38	farmer
	Anna	16		DYCK	Heinr	10	none
	Margretha	14		HAMM	Wilh	59	farmer
	Catharina	11			Catharina	46	
	Johann	9			Emilie	15	
	Gustan	7		HAMM	Johann	61	farmer
CLAASSEN	Catharina	57	widow		Maria	55	
	Ason	26			Maria	26	
	Catharina	25			Agatha	22	
PENNER	Jacob	21		DYCK	Peter	55	farmer
	Heinrich	50	farmer		Agatha	62	
	Margretha	54			Anna	24	
	Joh	17			Peter	29	
	Heinrich	15			Johann	21	
CLAASSEN	Gerhard	13		ENOS	Anna	35	none
	Abraham	51	farmer	REGIER	Bernhard	28	farmer
	Anna	38			Maria	28	wife
	Anna	14		REGIER	Jacob	27	farmer
	Johann	12			Agatha	24	wife
	Abraham	8		BARTEL	Lenhard	18	farmer
CLAASSEN	Justine	6		DYCK	Johann	20	farmer
BRUCKS	Gerhard	57	farmer	FROESE	Abraham	45	carpenter
CLAASSEN	Diedrich	19	farmer		Ida	38	wife
	Diedrich	52	farmer		David	4	
	Maria	48			Ida	2	
	Rudolf	20			Cornelius	m6	
	Gerhard	18		FAST	Nicolaus	23	farmer
	Gustav	15		FAST	Wilhelm	23	farmer
	Johann	10		PENNER	Johann	22	farmer
	Maria	8		HAMM	Johannes	24	farmer
CLAASSEN	Edward	22	farmer	HAMM	Wilhelm	13	
	Justine	22			Hermann	43	farmer
THIMM	Johann	34	farmer				
	Lisette	29					

that He would continue to keep us safe on the great sea; that he shelters us under His eagle's wings into the depths of our hearts within His will. Then I gave a sermon based on Genesis 12: 1-4. In conclusion, I blessed the whole assembly, and we sang verses of a hymn. Thus ended the service. Ach, I felt so alone there before this community, to give them as a flock pasture to graze, on the green pasture of life, and to drink from the healing springs. What a challenge this was for me, who is so weak a speaker. But what joy I had to be allowed to serve the Lord within

the talents that He has given me. May he put words into my mouth that do not return empty but become a blessing to others as a crown of righteousness.

We continued Sunday the 18th of June till near 6:00 pm we saw Calais on the left side, and the English coast on the right side, which we approached. It was an uneven landscape that we followed all night. In the morning around 4-5:00 we arrived at South Hampton and docked there. We stayed in the harbor and after breakfast went into the town. We were unable to enjoy some things because of our lack of knowledge of English, but we marveled at all the good, some strange to us, on display behind the glass of the show windows. We returned to the ship at noon. We marveled at the equipment on the town's streets: the wagons are high two-wheeled carriages, the horses are broad-breasted and strong. Almost all the horses are wagon horses like our Brabant horses in Prussia, with sloping back and protruding fronts. In the afternoon we returned to the city but we did not find a nice park. At 7:00 pm dinner was served, followed by a small devotion with reading from Psalm 106, a prayer, and a song.

Tuesday June 20 the sky was clear, beautiful weather. We enjoyed our noon meal in the city but then returned to the ship. At 3:00 we left the harbor, stopped briefly a few times to pick up mail, and saw the Isle of Wight on the left side with its peculiar cliffs and fortresses. The bay became ever wider; sea gulls and other birds followed us, and sea lions were seen at the water's edge. Toward evening the youth began to sing in harmony including the emigration song "dare you fear? On our ship there stands a man... and so on." Soon a large crowd joined in the singing. Eventually we held devotions. And so we traveled on, through the night, until we were on the high sea where we saw some remarkable things.

Wednesday June 21 the sea was somewhat rough, not like we see in the Baltic where a strong wind produces sharp waves. This was more like the water every 30 rods produces a high wave like a regular mountain, that gradually rises and falls. We saw fish that followed the side of the ship, that had wide bodies and pointed noses. Someone called them "pig fish" (*Schweinefische*) with round bodies that resembled English pigs. They would shoot several rods out of the water and coming to the ship from afar. Toward evening of this day after an enjoyable noonday meal of fish, I began to feel sick. I rushed to the deck just in time to have to throw up. Until then I had enjoyed the meals, but from that moment the appetite was gone; now we needed to force ourselves to eat. Some days we needed to just lay down. My wife threw up some time earlier, and so we all became seasick. Anna found a deck chair, and there was also a sofa for two persons. But soon many others were looking for deck chairs but none were available. Thursday June 22 the wind blew even stronger so that the dining room table edge boards were put up to keep the plates from sliding off. *Ach*, the might of our God is remarkable, how the great water moves, in order to throw from one side to the other a big ship 378 feet long and relatively wide. Standing or walking on board such a ship is almost impossible without grabbing onto something that is fixed. As the waves foam over the ship, the front went down and the back went up, and then the opposite, as if it was riding over a mountain and then again through a valley; so, a rocking motion. The ship shuddered. The most comfortable place was, as said, on deck. That is

where especially the young women lying on the floor because the deck chairs were all taken. In our group the most severely affected with seasickness was father-in-law Harder von Junken. He had to spend entire nights on deck, to avoid having to throw up immediately.

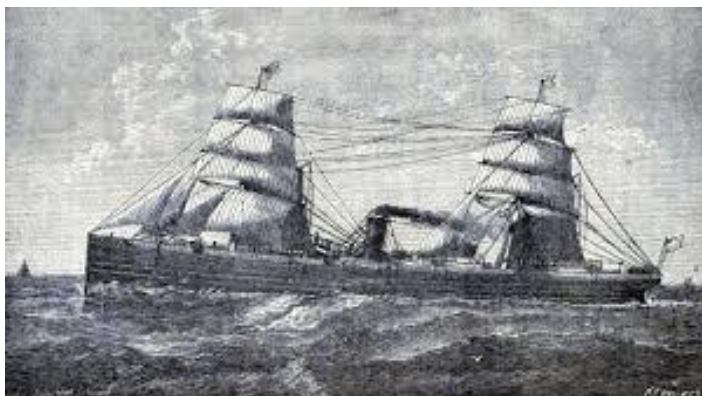
The food on the ship, initially, was very enjoyable, although new to us. Breakfast from 7 to 8:00 with fried meat with potatoes and soup, and coffee with various bakery, as well as heavy rye bread with butter and cheese—all tasted delectable. At noon, a four-course meal. It soon became too much of a good thing, especially those meals when fish was served. That is when most of the passengers got sick: throwing up and feeling sick in one's whole body.

According to our steward, our ship had about 500 passengers and 118 crew members. All these people needed to be fed. So, one has to imagine how many provisions are required, not just for two weeks but for a possibly much longer time. In case of accidents or machine breakdowns and repairs the journey would take longer, even though the travelers are not to be told about these incidents. On this day in the afternoon the ship's top steward (*Oberschifemeister*) came down out of his booth and asked us if we wanted to see a whale. There is one announcing itself with squirting water out of its back. We saw several waterspouts squirting up out of the ocean's surface. I add here that on our first day, Tuesday, we saw another ship, the *Nekar*, of the North German Lloyd company, passing by on its way from America. The passengers were celebrating and shouting to have seen land. Saturday the 24th June the water was again rough and some thought the wind was stronger than we had experienced it so far, every 18 rods a valley and every 15 rods a peak, not breakers but alternatively colossal rises and depths. The previous Thursday and other times we would see no other ships for a length of time. We were therefore pleased to see other ships appear, usually ships with up to 20 sails traveling with the wind. Sunday the 25th of June it was foggy so that we would regularly hear a low rumbling whistle to warn other ships of our presence. The *Rhein* had recently had an accident in the fog with a French sailing ship with 19 crewmembers, all of whom were rescued. The accident, caused by the other ship, although they heard the *Rhein*'s whistle, another ship had passed and they thought they were in the clear. At the time the *Rhein*'s crew and passengers took a collection for the other ship in the accident.

In the morning of Sunday the 25th we again held a worship service with the appropriate sermon for the second week after *Triulatus* [?] with a prayer before and after, and hymn singing. And so, in our weakness, gave our Lord the glory. Monday the 26th June it was initially dark, but then cleared up with a high westerly wind, so that the sails on our ship were taken down; otherwise it was a fine travel day. The following day as I can on deck a three-master sail ship passed by. Also, at the same time a report circulated that during the night a corpse had been released into the depths of the sea. It was said to be a machinist who suffered a stroke due to the excessive heat his place of work, where he used ice to cool himself and thus brought on his sickness. The corpse was wrapped in linen, tied to a board that was weighted with a stone or iron, and committed into the water. On that day we saw five ships all with sails. With our steam power

we were able to move quite rapidly at 13 nautical miles per hour according to the helmsman (Zahlmeister), --4 nautical miles = 1 German mile—thus at least 3 German miles per hour was our speed. Wednesday the 24th June was windy from the morning on so because of our many sails the ship was listing to the right side; especially toward evening, the right side was 10 feet lower than the left at times, making walking quite difficult. In the evening the wind increased, with rain. The turbulence of the weather prompted us to offer a communal prayer to the Lord during our evening devotions.

Oh, when our heart longs to lay its burden before the Lord, the prayer flows so easily, if the spirit of grace moves our inner person, and an unspoken sigh springs from the heart. Out of weakness, the righteous will



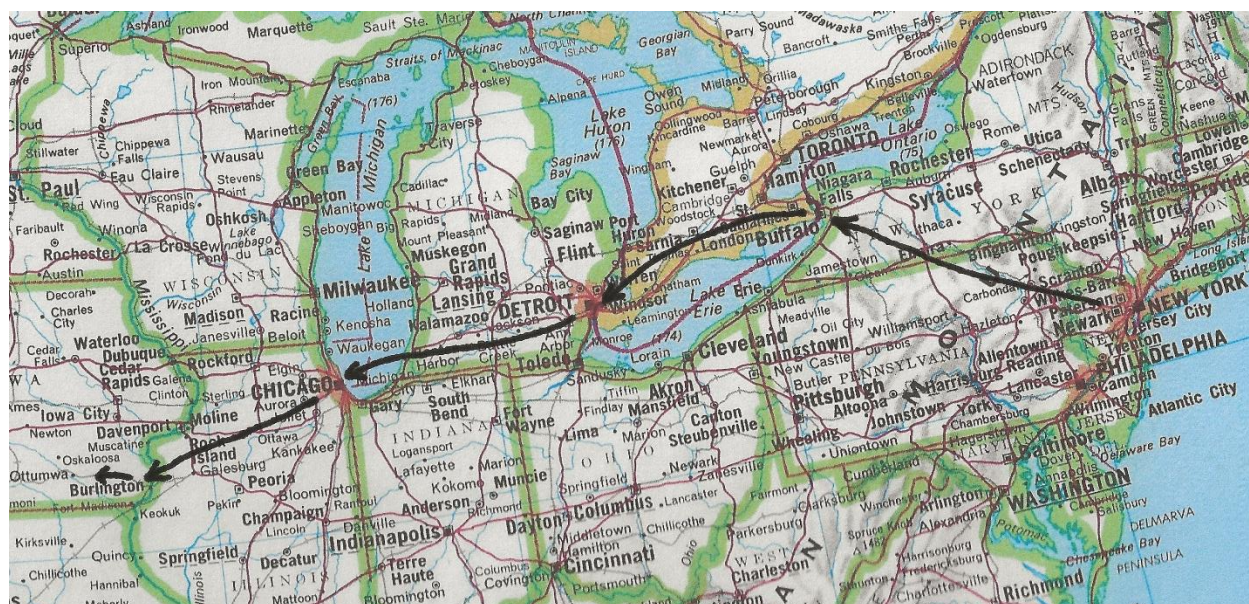
succeed. So, we may measure our standing before our God, whether we belong to him; for God's Spirit helps us in our weakness, and gives witness that we are His children.

Friday the 30th of June we held a collection for the widow and children of the machinist who had died. From our group we collected 25 Thaler. Also, in a letter to the Capitan we recognized our gratitude and contentment with the service we had received. Several of us signed the letter on behalf of the 2nd class passengers. On this day we were expected to get our first sighting of land. But the fog was so thick that the ship only traveled at half speed, while frequently dropping the lead weight measure determining a water depth of about 40 feet. In the afternoon the sky cleared and at 4:00 pm we saw the shore that we were approaching. A pilot came on board, and we continued until 10:00 pm when we beheld the light of a Lighttower, and hope that we would soon see land, even though we were to have another night's rest on the ship. However, no one slept and at 2:00 am we could see many lights on both sides of the ship as we were in the bay approaching the harbor. Then our ship stopped, awaiting daylight. In the morning, we saw the first American shore, so trim with magnificent houses and the natural green of woods and bright colors. This was the view that made us feel like we were being born anew, with the hope that soon we would have solid earth beneath our feet. In all the faces was evident the hope of land, land, land.

Bring in the year of our Lord, hear the Lord's Word, give Him praise. We who are in debt to Him; Praise the Lord, my soul, forget not the good he has done. The Lord has brought us this far; He alone deserves praise, honor, and glory now and forever more.

We docked in Hoboken at 6:00 am, and had our breakfast together with our group as usual on the ship. Six persons in our group were escorted by an agent of North German Lloyd to a bank in New York to exchange money, and to their office to take care of all paperwork. At the bank we

received for one Prussian Mark 26 cents or would need to pay 37 ½ Thaler for one Dollar *Grünbeck*, or for 20 Marks received \$5.30 in *Grünbecks*. Shortly after breakfast we learned that we would be departing on this same day of arrival into the American heartland. So our time in this great world city would be very short. Such a city is a wonder, with eight-story buildings some of which are built of iron, decorated with the flags of many nations flying from the windows all the way to the top. This was in honor of the approaching folk festival in 3 days' time to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the independence of the United State. Remarkable was the heavy traffic in the water between New York and Hoboken. About 20 steamships had crossed the ocean with us and were now in the harbor. Ferries were carrying passengers amongst the colossal ships "entering the Vistula." In two columns they would enter big sheds with a wall between them, with walkways on either side for the pedestrians.



Already before noon, while still on the ship, railroad agent C. B. Schmidt of Topeka, Kansas met us to escort us further. Also, co-pastor Epp and friend Wall of Nebraska, of Isaak Peters' congregation,³⁰ was there to accompany us. At 4:00 in the afternoon as we left the city of New York, with our crates and boxes, on a little boat toward the railroad station that was near the water. We moved as quickly as possible, leaving behind some of our luggage, to be able to catch the 8:00 pm train. Shortly we were told to board the train. This was a surprise to us in that not all of our baggage was in the train cars; it would follow later, we were told. And so Saturday, July 1, as it was getting dark, the train began to take us into the middle of America. We drove through the night and through the state of New York, to Buffalo and to Niagara Falls, where the water falls in several streams down a very high bank, a remarkable view. A very high trestle bridge carried the train over the river coming from the falls. Then we followed Lake Erie on the left side through Canada arriving in the night in Detroit; from there we crossed another body of water on a large ferry which transported the train cars across, arriving in Chicago Monday morning at

³⁰ Bethesda, Henderson. See ME IV, p. 153.

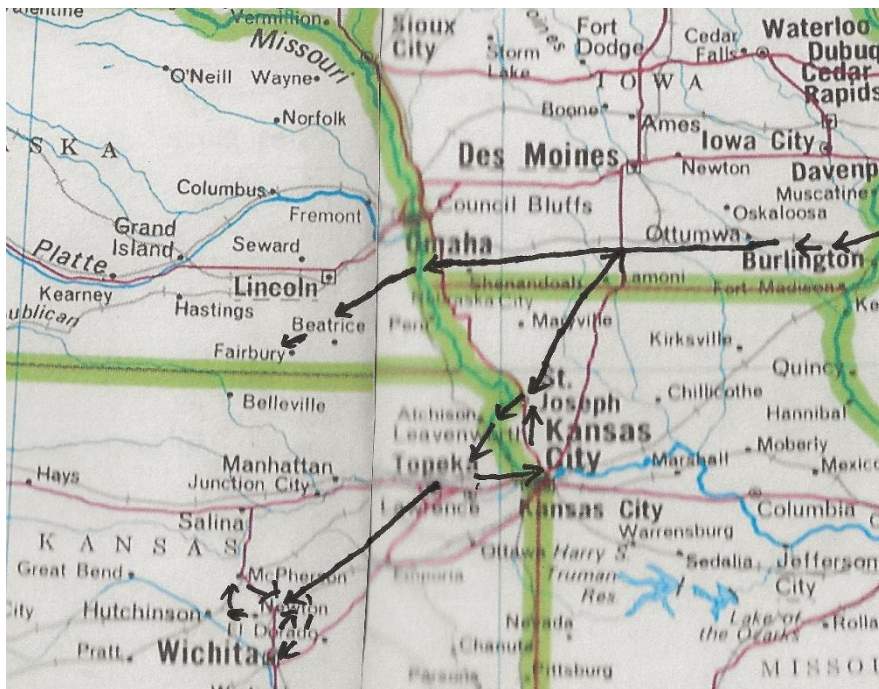
11:00, where we had our noon meal. On this just described trek we saw much forest and few fields of worked terrain. At noon we departed, driving through Chicago, this city so very important for trade and quite large. In Illinois we saw very fine fields with bountiful meadows of clover and xxx on which cattle herds in good condition were grazing, and fields of Welsh corn and other grains in the best condition. Toward evening we reached Burlington, in the state of Iowa. During the day we experienced much rain but that didn't affect our travel.

Ach, train travel in America is so comfortable. The traveler who wishes to sleep at night, and has the means, can rent a double sleeping berth for \$2 per night. My wife used this facility once, but it was much turmoil and trouble, so she couldn't sleep anyway. Also, on the train all necessities such as fresh bread and fruit are offered hourly and may be purchased for a not cheap price, but still affordable. In Burlington train station we witness much lively activity. Preparations were underway for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the independence of the United States from England. The locomotives were decorated with ribbons and flowers. But soon we had had our fill of rejoicing and celebration and journeyed on, arriving in Mount Pleasant Iowa at 10:00 pm, thus having reached our destination. I note here that our friends who decided to go directly to Kansas via St. Louis had already reached their destination of Halstead, Kansas. We arrived in Mt. Pleasant in a heavy rainstorm, in the dark. We took our luggage into the train station. I, stepping out of the train car in the dark, did not step far enough onto the platform and fell, scraping my shinbone. After two days this caused an angry welt which took me six weeks to heal through the use of a pad and plant compresses (*gekochtes Küschen kraut & geklopfte Wege blätter*)—medicines blessed by God. As we entered the train station we were greeted by Cornelius Jansen, who had waited for us. He had arranged lodging for us and helped us over bad roads to get to our accommodations, beds and sleeping bags, so we could rest after this long journey. After we awakened from our sweet night's sleep the next morning, the Jansen family served us breakfast, which we gladly accepted. Praise and thank the Lord for all the grace that He has allowed us to experience, bringing us to our destination with joy and good health. He deserves all our honor and glory.

After breakfast I went with Jansen into town to find living quarters for our family. We found the house in which we are now resident and which will be available for other immigrants. It was empty at the moment; it was big enough to accommodate our family of nine persons. Rent will be \$16.66 per month. I bought some furniture, a table and a [coffee?] grinder. The children moved in on that same day; my wife and I joined them the next day. The Lord has kept us in his grace thus far.

The first trip to Kansas began on August 14, 1876. Leaving Mt. Pleasant by train at 9:00 pm we traveled westward into the night. Because of the darkness we could not see the Iowa landscape. As the morning became light, we could see that the countryside had few settlements. But later

around Hamburg there was a great amount of Welsh corn; later near Atchinson, very flat land. The Welsh corn was very good, but there was also much forest and masses of logs from the clearing of the land for crops. Often trees are ringed, or felled and left to lay while corn is planted all around; eventually the rotting logs are then burned. This process may take several years and remains to be carried out in the future. In Kansas, by contrast, soon after Atchinson, the landscape is an open wild prairie. To



reach Atchinson, our first city in Kansas, we traveled from the state of Missouri over the Missouri river on a very tall bridge which also has a lane for pedestrians and small wagons. After 22 hours of travel, we continued our journey at 7:00 pm from Atchinson. Traveling with me was my son-in-law Jakob W. Regier, and friends from Kansas who had immigrated with us, and were returning home after visiting Nebraska and Iowa. The train moved very slowly so that we reached Topeka at 1:00 am. From Atchinson on we were accompanied by a young man who had immigrated several years earlier but spoke good German. He carried on a lively conversation with our young people in English. In Topeka we noted that there were many Germans here. Continuing, we arrived in Halstead at 9:00 the next morning. After breakfast we went to see Dietrich Claassen. I note here that I stayed with father-in-law Harder of Gurken who was living with lumber dealer Peter Wiebe of Tralau. In the afternoon I went to see Andres and Entz farms; also the farm of a young Dyck of Bezendorf, who is Mrs. Wiebe's brother. On this outing we saw a large herd of around 100 cattle, being herded by the farmer himself on horseback. Afterward we returned to Halstead, I bathed in the water of Warkentine's fine mill, which is driven by water. In the evening we saw numerous fires coming from farmers who lit their straw stacks from threshing wheat to get rid of them. At the mill we met numerous brothers of the faith from Gaeddert's congregation³¹ who had brought their wheat to the mill. The next morning of Friday August 18, we accompanied the Halstead friends to the train station at 5:00 am to meet General Agent Mr. C.B. Schmidt who had come from Topeka. The purpose of this meeting was to inspect possible land purchases. At 6:00 am we drove off to Peabody with D. Claassen and his son Edouard, Penner from Dibau, and I with Jakob Regier and father-in-law

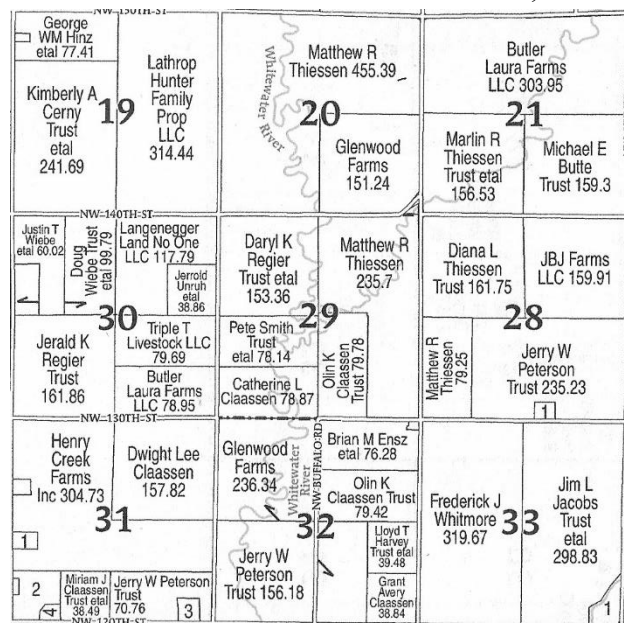
³¹ Hoffnungsau, near Inman, where Dietrich Gaeddert was elder, and one of the leaders of a migration of this community from Molotschna colony, Russia in 1874.

Harder and his son. From Peabody we were to visit sites. The driver of one of our wagons was a Mr. Funk who worked with the land agent, and represented government land and who was the translator on the ground for negotiations. The entire party that went to inspect land consisting of eight people, left at 8:00 am in two wagons. As we traveled south, we came to very uneven terrain where, crossing a *Kricke*,³² as the wagon was descending the slope, father-in-law Harder fell backwards from his front seat. At first, he could barely breathe, but soon his pain subsided, and we continued our drive. Already only three miles outside of the town there was available land and nicely laid out farms with living xxx[?]. Our drive continued till we had driven 12 miles in a westerly direction. The Welsh corn fields ended, and farms became less frequent. But the prairie grass was abundant and thick. The landscape was rolling hills, so that from the highest points one could see far. We came to the Whitewater River with old and young growth trees so that farms nearby included up to 70 acres of trees. Earlier we had seen mainly flat grassland, with grasses up to 5 feet tall. The corn was also nice and tall. We stopped at a farm for noon, and returned to Peabody by 7:00 pm, where we enjoyed a meal at the guesthouse before traveling to Wichita for the night.

Our previous day's travels had taken us across lands in three townships of Butler County. It is a very favorable region. The new railroad that is already being planned is to go 9 miles above the Whitewater river from Florence to Eldorado. On Saturday August 19 we also drove to the west side of Butler County where we encountered long stretches of very tall prairie grass, until we reached a farm where the watermelons tasted very good. That farmer owned a section of land, number 29 on the map, where two streams join.³³

This farm has 80 acres of woods, 100-120 head cattle, 70-80 pigs, 10 horses and mules. He has 30 bushels of winter wheat from the previous year, and 14 from this year's harvest. The farmer said he wanted to sell out at \$14 per acre, a total of \$9,000. and the appropriate sum for the buildings and livestock. He wanted to sell because his wife had died so keeping the farm going was too much for him. Around this land and across it were 6 miles of fence (that is, hedges).

We left there at 3:00 pm and reached Wichita at 8:00 in the evening, and where we stayed the night, during which it rained. The next day, August 20, was a Sunday, the Lord's Day. We rose early and



³² Peter Dyck readily incorporates new words, including foreign slang, into his vocabulary.

³³ Peter Dyck does not give the name of the township, but his designation of “two streams coming together” and the section number suggest that this is in Clifford Township. The featured map from 2023 shows section 29 and surrounding sections, and current land owners.

rode to Newton, arriving at 5:00 am. There we enjoyed breakfast and wondered how we would get to Halstead, since fewer trains traveled on Sunday. Mr. Schmidt had already returned to Topeka. So, we were dependent for our travel on a young Mr. Claassen who originated in Lichtenau. Because of the considerable rain, and the high water in the *Kricks*, we could not take a carriage to Halstead. So, we wondered if we might take a handcar or a small wagon on the railroad. But we needed permission. That was granted, and we left Newton at 8:00 am, arriving in Halstead 1 ½ hours later. We stayed with father Harder till noon, at which time we went to the school for the service. Elder [Christian E.] Krehbiel preached the Sunday's gospel, before and after which a hymn was sung, out of hymnbooks. There was also a prayer before and after the sermon. During the service it rained intensely with lightning and thunder, causing us to postpone our departure. We visited with Dirk Claassen about the elections having to do with land purchases. It became urgent that we purchase land as soon as possible—which then happened. The next day, Monday, we continued to Gaeddert's congregation with friends Martens and Harder from that community (the first named individual had married my cousin in Russia).³⁴ These friends had joined us already on Sunday. We reached our destination after 5 hours, traveling through Burrton, a newly formed town on the railroad.

After a noon meal with Martens, and a nap, we went to Elder Ohm Gaeddert's, who then joined us to visit friend Harder, where we ate our evening meal, and to Fröse, before returning to brother-in-law Martens for the night. Tuesday August 22 dawned with a bright sunrise, demonstrating again the love of God in so beautiful a nature, with the sunlight playing over the endless prairie, rising upward from earth to heaven. To me it seemed so remarkable, transplanted to this place where in God's goodness and glory our Lord accompanies us—which we must continue to acknowledge. We were at the Martens, with the Gaeddert family, for a noon meal and, after a short rest, drove to our cousin Johann Claassen from Blumenfeld. We arrived somewhat late because of the difficult roads. This cousin's land was very flat and even; it was so thoroughly watered from all the rain that he would not be able to work it for a while. I saw then that land without drainage is to be avoided. On the 23rd of August we drove to elder Ohm Buller,³⁵ drank noonday coffee together, and at 4:00 pm cousin Claassen took us to Newton where we looked at horses. We stayed overnight at the National Hotel. This same evening the young men of the Kansas immigrants came to us with Mr. Schmidt and declared that they had purchased land. We were with Penner of Diebau in the evening.

Thursday, August 24 we took the train home. We had wanted to check land in Nebraska, but because of a letter from my wife stating that Cornelius Jansen was leaving his farm to return to Mt. Pleasant, we decided to return too. Via Atchinson we reached home with son-in-law Jakob

³⁴ Peter Dyck appears to consider spouses of cousins to be "in-laws." This stretches the notion of being related by marriage alliances to a potentially very wide spectrum. Also, along these same lines, it is not quite clear in what sense Harder of Halstead is his "father-in-law" or "father."

³⁵ Alexanderwohl congregation.

Regier after a 24-hour train ride. We had spent 9 ½ days on this trip. Thus the Lord kept us well and returned us to our loved ones, who were also kept well. To God be the glory.

Our second trip to Kansas (and Nebraska) began on September 10, 1876, at 9:00 am. We, together with a party of 18 people from Mt. Pleasant, which included brother Suderman; and Quiring of Sommerfeld, who had joined us a few days earlier. Because it was daytime we could see the Iowa landscape in contrast to our earlier night journey. We saw hills, some forest, and much standing water because of all the recent rains. We also observed that the railroad tracks lacked firm foundation due to the rains, requiring the train to travel slower than usual. In some places the earth was entirely missing from beneath the tracks. Near Fairfield we saw cultivated land and forest. As we traveled toward the Nebraska border, at Chariton we saw a fine stretch of land suitable for cultivation. We saw that the Welsh corn was still very green, not close to ripening. This confirmed C. Jansen opinion that so far north corn was a crop that would not ripen in time and thus bore a low yield. Arriving in Redoch (Red Oak?), which is in Nebraska,³⁶ we saw that the city is bordered on two sides by forest, on one side by flat land, and the other a river, behind that a bluff. The town is a pleasant landscape. Here we saw our first grasshoppers, still small at ¾ inch long. The damage they had caused was evident in the gardens, where they had eaten vegetable leaves; the trees were less affected. We needed to wait a long while here due to train delays, so that we departed at midnight. After traveling in the rain we arrived at the Missouri River which could only be crossed by a ferry. Our locomotive was driven onto the ferry and taken across where it was coupled to cars waiting on the other side, in Nebraska, in the town of Plattsmouth. Having arrived here at 6:00 pm we continued, in the rain, arriving at Lincoln at 10:00 pm, where we found a guesthouse and had coffee. Several of our party went to the land office to organize inspections of land for purchase.

We had agreed that we would leave at 6:00 am the next morning by train for the town of Cromwell.³⁷ However, the train did not arrive. We were told that it would arrive at noon. In the meantime we visited the immigrants' house where we conversed with German colonists from the Volga region of Russia. After that we went to see a stone masonry factory. We also saw a demonstration about an inland sea that provided salt. In the course of the day the water level rises and sinks. When the water is at its lowest level salt can be scraped up. The residue is cooked and crystalizes. This is ground and becomes a soft substance used in guesthouses where meals are served.

We left soon and arrived in Cromwell at 3:00 pm and continued immediately to inspect lands. The local officials had been notified by telegraph that we would be coming. What we saw was uneven and had been thoroughly cultivated. The leaves of the Welsh corn had been totally eaten by grasshoppers, so that the ears had ripened prematurely and were shriveled. The yield was

³⁶ Peter Dyck was misinformed. If this is indeed Red Oak, it is in Iowa.

³⁷ Peter Dyck's chronology is off here. There is no town named Cromwell in Nebraska; it is rather in Iowa, east of Red Oak, near Creston.

small, half of what we had seen in Kansas. The next day we rode out in six wagons toward Alexandria.³⁸ Initially we saw much grassland, and tall Welsh corn not damaged by grasshoppers. As we approached the town there was much less grassland and the soil seemed to be dried out, despite all the rain that had recently fallen. The soil seemed to be unfertile. One of the farms we saw was located near a stream with running water from a Crick. Another was a small farm belonging to a widow, of 240 acres, which she would sell for \$2,500, and \$500 for the inventory and buildings. The house was relatively new, especially the living room facing woods; stream was running nicely and might drive a water mill. The railroad had much land available.

We in our five wagons returned to Alexandria by 7:00 pm except for Mr. Ernst who had returned to Frontwell. The next day, Friday, September 15, with four wagons and two riders we departed at 4:00 am for the well-known mill on the Blue River. The cost was \$4/wagon, driver, and 2 horses each. After driving four hours over open prairie landscape we noticed that the two riders were concentrated with their whips over something on the ground. It was a 3 ½ - 4 foot long rattle snake which they killed immediately. The snake's color is grey with dark strips on its back. Toward noon we came to a farm where our driver named Alexander was the sole man and original resident of the town by this name. The farm where we had our noon meal was in an earthen dugout cabin, but the host and his family were educated people, who had a harmonium in the main room. The table setting on which we ate was also quite fine. The farmer was planning on building his permanent house soon. From there we returned along the Blue River. It was lined with woods and still unripe wild plums. After six hours we arrived in Alexandria for the night. The grass in this region is rather short and the landscape dry considering the recent rains. We saw buffalo places [wallows?] but otherwise no animals. Our travels on this day were without cost. I note that along the Blue River any woods that are there belong to the adjacent landowners. On our drive along the Blue River we saw numerous water -driven mills. Especially the Alexander mill was well built and in good condition. The proprietor also had a herd of heavy echelle pigs. He explained to us that he arrived in America with his wife eight years ago, with one dollar in his pocket. Now he owned a triple wheel mill built by himself and additional equipment. Later that same evening we visited the home of a man who had been with us on the land inspection and who showed us a most remarkable talent. He had a harmonium on which he played a tune, which then echoed as a multi-part accompaniment in a whistling sound. This to-us new experience evoked much wonder.

Saturday the 16th of September at 5:00 am we drove along the Blue River with two wagons and six horses, arriving at Fairbury at 6:30. I and Aaron Claassen visited the Kleine Gemeinde³⁹

³⁸ This small town is located about 10 miles northwest of Jansen, Nebraska, where Dyck's associate Cornelius Jansen had his sheep farm.

³⁹ A settlement near Jansen, Nebraska of several villages of immigrant Mennonites from Russia with a strict conservative orientation. A few years later the entire community moved to Meade in southwest Kansas.

leadership, a certain Mr. Fast. Afternoon the whole group drove to a nearby Indian reservation.⁴⁰ It was a fine parcel of land, better than the township by that same name. The creeks were somewhat deep, but the slopes to them gradual. And they were lined with big trees that might be of some interest. I stayed the night with an Ohm Friesen. On Sunday the 17th we drove to worship service where Herr Zimmerman and Ohm L. Sudermann preached. Then we drove to Peter Jansen's for our noon meal, where numerous people were gathered. The farm is a big establishment: two residences, a horse barn, a large sheep barn, and numerous houses for herders. There is also a windmill to pump water for the livestock. The farmyard is large, 290 steps long by 100 steps wide. In the evening, the herds were brought back from pasture, about 1,600 sheep and 80 head of cattle. Sunday evening for the night I traveled to Ohm Fast. Monday morning in the rain we began our trip; from Thiessens we returned to the Indian Reservation, but we learned from a local farmer that the land was not yet available, so we continued on to Beatrice. . Peter Jansen and Johannes Penner inquired independently about the Reservation land. The next day they followed us and reported that the some of the Indians still live on the land and were interested in selling half of it, but it was unclear when this might occur.

We drove to Lincoln where we met our other travel colleagues, now a group of 13 persons that would continue on to Kansas. We left Tuesday at 7:00 pm arriving in Atchinson at 2:00 am. From there we continued at 10:00 am on to Kansas and arrived in Peabody at 8:00 pm. In Topeka we were joined by C.B. Schmidt with whom we discussed land inspections. I note here that our Nebraska friends had already from Lincoln begun their return home. Others, Aaron Claassen and Penner, along with H. Sudermann and Quiring, left us in Emporia to check out Indian lands in Council Grove.⁴¹ Thursday the 20th September at 8:00 am we drove 3 ½ hours to visit Ewert's congregation. Then I, Bernhard Regier and my son Peter went to Jakob Funk's while L. Sudermann and his brother went to Riesens. We stayed with Funks although he was not at home. His house was 50 feet long and 30 wide, with an additional summer kitchen and dining room built on at a right angle to the main house. The main house was built of mortared stone. The entire house had cost \$420 paid to workers. He had a sheep herd of 600 head and 36 head of cattle. This Mr. Funk owns a section of land that he purchased in separate parcels in the past two years, with the original purchase giving him title to the land. On some of the outlying acres he built houses for renters who will receive income from breaking sod (\$3/acre) and the crops they grow, paying a third of the yield to Funk. Another morning we drove from Funk's to Elder Ewert who was not at home. We noted his sheep and cattle herds, his 80 acres of planted trees. We were joined by the Sudermann brothers. In the evening we drove to Riesens, who is a cousin of Mrs. Jansen in Mt. Pleasant. Funk's wife commented that her father Johannes Neufeld who had

⁴⁰ This was the Otoe reservation, a 24-section territory in the southeast corner of Jefferson and Gage Counties, extending into Kansas. Created by treaty in 1854, it also included other tribes from across Nebraska. This reservation was publicly auctioned in 1881, and the residents removed to Oklahoma.

⁴¹ A 20-section tract that was the last settlement site of the Kaw Nation in Kansas before they were removed by the U.S. Government to Oklahoma in 1873. The Kaw Nation has in recent years re-established a presence in the Council Grove area with the Allegawaho Heritage Memorial Park and ceremonial site near remnants of their homes of 150 years ago.

migrated to Russia was raised by Peter Töws in Herrenhagen in Prussia. The latter was my step-grandfather, who arrived there when my father married in 1817. Riesen had bought a farm on $\frac{3}{4}$ section of land. Saturday morning the 22nd of September we drove to Ohm Buller via the Gnadenau settlement of elder Wiebe. We arrived in Gnadenau where the entire community was assembled; our group of 12 ate a noon meal with them.⁴² Elder Ewert and his wife joined us there.⁴³ In the evening we drove on through Newton to Halstead where son Peter and I spent the night with Harder. The Sunday worship service was at Görtz's, the brothers Abraham and Leonard Sudermann preached. Monday afternoon we drove to Andres's. Tuesday morning we traveled to Peabody and then immediately with Mr. C.B. Schmidt to settlers in the countryside, and then back to town in the evening. Here we met with the Sudermann brothers and Quiring who were on their way to examine an Indian reservation.

The next morning we again met with the farmer who had buildings, fences, and garden and plowed land available for sale from \$15 to \$20 per acre. The next day, Thursday, the 28th of September, we drove out with Mr. Funk from Peabody and arrived at a half-section farm of 320 acres that the owner wanted to sell because of financial need, which we then bought for \$3,000, plus \$600 for inventory. The house is 24' long and 15' wide. There is a cellar under the house, accessible from the outside. There is also a small barn with plank siding. There is a large, fenced-in yard; two wells. The inventory appraised is worth \$1,100. The seller will take all his clothing, linens, and personal effects, leaving all the rest in the sale. There are 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ & 40 rods of planted fence hedge, 130 acres of plowed land; 190 acres of unbroken prairie. We drove with the seller named Duncan to the bank where Mr. Funk translated into English and recorded the documents before lawyer Salisbury.

The next day, Friday September 29, we left for home. In Emporia we met the Sudermann brothers to hear their report of the Indian reservation land; we shared with them our farm purchase. We rode together with them till Topeka. From there we traveled on to Atchinson and St. Joseph where there was a big exposition with many people. We reached Hopkins at 11:00 pm and stayed the night there. Next morning we traveled through Creston, Cheriton, and Fairfield, arriving at Mt. Pleasant at 7:00 pm. I and Bernhard and Peter, and all our other loved ones, wife and children, were well. The Lord has accomplished all this, in 19 days; to Him alone the glory.

Our third journey by train to Kansas began October 10, 1876. I, Jakob Regier and Agathe, Peter and Johannes. These four children and Gerhard Claassen left Mt. Pleasant at 10:00 am. The previous day we had taken boxes and other items to the train station to send them ahead. With this trip these children would be able to begin business on the newly purchased farm. At the train station we witnessed an unusual episode. A corpse was being carried from the oncoming

⁴² This was a major Mennonite Brethren settlement of Russian immigrants in the U.S., a large village, south of today's Hillsboro.

⁴³ The Elder Ewert with whom Dyck had toured Russia in 1870, now elder of the Bruderthal congregation whose rural church was dismantled for the creation of Marion Reservoir.

train that had been in an accident. The corpse's legs were cut off and he had bled to death. The cause of the accident was his drunkenness. He had wanted to mount the train but had fallen under the wheels and been killed.

Our trip went smoothly to Ottumwa where we arrived at 11:00 am, and took our noon meal from our provisions. I note here that two other immigrant families were traveling to Kansas, the Bergmanns and the Fröses, both from Russia, a total of 12 persons including children. In addition there was a young Mr. Fast from Prussia. Also, we had General Agent Schmidt with us, who had come from Topeka the previous day to show us the cheapest train tickets. He took his noon meal in the restaurant so we needed to wait till 3:00 to continue to Mobley where we arrived at 11:00 pm. There we needed to wait 5 hours to continue; we experienced little rest that night but we did have coffee and buttered bread. So we continued to Kansas City where we arrived at 11:00 am, changed trains, and arrived in Topeka at 3:00 pm where Herr Schmidt left us. We arrived in Peabody in the evening and stayed in our previous accommodation, while the Bergmanns and the Fröses rested in the train station.

In the morning we drove two wagons to our farm, accompanied by Mr. Funk. Because I had banknotes instead of cash Funk feared that the seller might not want to vacate the premises. However after our arrival they began to pack their things; with their belongings and wife and children he drove to the neighbors. So we were now free to begin our business (*Freiheit zum Wirtschaften...*). But the beginning was problematic. We discovered that we had no spoons, so Agathe served us our milk soup in cups and whatever else was available. The next day we hitched the two mules to a farm wagon and undertook a shopping trip to Newton, 12 miles away. Our shopping list included numerous items, especially horses and a buggy. Unfortunately the town did not offer everything we were seeking. Lehmann's had a two-seater flat buggy for \$115, but to find horses we needed to travel 4 miles south of town where I bought two black horses with harness for \$275. So we were able to travel to Harder's settlement the next Sunday to hold a service where I had previously been asked. The rooms in the sheds are well suited as meeting places. Indeed, these were the only buildings available, even as lodging for the winter. Some settlers are having difficulty with their wells getting water. Both Harder families now have 70-foot-deep wells. Now they have abundant water, but before they needed to work with wine to drink. A complete stone-lined well costs \$1.90 per foot.

I stayed home and with the children, organized and worked on the farm. We harvested Welsh corn. For security against prairie fires, we plowed the boundaries of our fields to protect the hay and straw. We mowed the grass and whatever else was growing. In the past days we butchered a fat pig, at which work we were helped by a Mr. Schmidt from the Michaelin (Grace Hill) community; he received \$.90 per day.

Here is a list of the inventory I purchased with the farm: 2 mules, 2 cows, 5 fat pigs, 6 piglets, 40 chickens; a reaper, 3 plows, 2 corn cleaners, a set of harnesses, 10 sacks; in grain, 60 bushels

wheat, 30 bushels oats, 2.2 acres Welsh corn, potatoes; such tools and things commonly used on an American farm. We received many visitors such as elders of the congregations, other friends and brothers who were in financial need. The elders were collecting funds to help these latter. But I couldn't help them out because I lacked liquid cash. In order to plant wheat I purchased a drill for \$80, I have yet to pay and intend to do so before Christmas.

Because of the dry conditions we see prairie fires all around us, recently as it was getting dark up to twelve fires were visible on the horizon. The children have two neighbors with whom they associate, and with whom they can practice their English, and seek advice in American business practices.

On November 2nd with Gerhard Claassen as travel companion, we went with son Peter to Peabody to embark on a trip to Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.⁴⁴ I already had received tickets from General Agent Schmidt for the rail stretch from Kansas City to Ottumwa for only \$4 ½ per person. The entire journey was less expensive than the regular train fare. Our trip went very well although we needed to wait 5 hours to make the connection from Mobley and Ottumwa.

And so the Lord has kept us well and protected, brought us back, for which we are grateful. For his goodness and faithfulness, at home and in travels. We thank him now and for all eternity.

Peter Dyck

⁴⁴ No reason is given for this trip to Mt. Pleasant, but it seems that Peter Dyck may have gone to bring his wife and daughter Anna to Kansas. Their names were not mentioned in the group of the "third trip to Kansas."

The Agatha (Regier Entz) Dyck Family

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The Agathe-Regier- Entz-Dyck Family

In order to give the reader a good understanding of who the persons writing these letters are and to whom they are addressed I am including pages 139 and 140 from the "Bernhard Regier Genealogy" 1669-1973 by Joyce Regier Gaeddert.

	BIRTHDATE BIRTHPLACE MARRIAGE DATE	DATE OF DEATH OCCUPATION
III. AGATHE REGIER	January 24, 1815 West Prussia	April 5, 1886 Homemaker
Jacob Entz	1st Marriage February 18, 1836 September 23, 1809	September 16, 1848 Farmer
A. Jacob Entz Jr.	July 5, 1837 West Prussia July 15, 1865	September 29, 1906 Farmer
B. Bernhard Entz	August 15, 1838 West Prussia August 20, 1868	September 28, 1912 Farmer
C. Gerhard Entz	February 17, 1840 West Prussia	July 3, 1841
D. Anna Entz	October 8, 1841 West Prussia April 28, 1881	November 13, 1898 Homemaker
E. Abraham Entz	November 27, 1843 West Prussia July 10, 1873	October 15, 1924 Farmer
F. Agathe Entz	September 9, 1845 West Prussia	October 26, 1846
G. Marie Entz	February 23, 1848 West Prussia May 12, 1876	April 8, 1929 Homemaker
Rev. Peter Dyck	2nd Marriage July 12, 1849 April 3, 1821 West Prussia	May 7, 1885 Farmer and Minister

Agathe Regier Family , continued

Name	BIRTHDATE BIRTHPLACE MARRIAGE DATE	DATE OF DEATH OCCUPATION
H. Catherine Dyck	August 2, 1850 West Prussia January 24, 1872	June 10, 1924 Homemaker
I. Agathe Dyck	January 17, 1852 West Prussia May 12, 1876	June 1, 1911 Homemaker
J. Peter Dyck Jr.	July 11, 1853 West Prussia	May 1, 1878
K. Johannes Dyck	February 17, 1855 West Prussia	May 1, 1878
L. David Dyck	May 14, 1856 West Prussia	June 6, 1856

The first four letters of this collection are addressed to Johannes Regier, either as "Dear Cousin" or as "Dear Brother". This particular person was a cousin of the above Peter Dyck Jr. and Johannes Dyck but he was also the youngest brother of the husbands of the above Marie Entz Catherine Dyck, and Agathe Dyck.

The fifth letter is addressed to Jacob Entz Jr and bears the signature of his youngest half-brother, Johannes Dyck.

The sixth letter, addressed to "Dear Children" by Agathe Dyck really is meant only for her children still remaining in West Prussia, at the time of writing.

The seventh letter, written by Catherine Dyck Regier, and by her husband Abraham Regier is addressed to the father of Abraham Regier.

The explanation given for the sixth letter also applies to the 8th letter.

By the time the ninth letter was written only the Jacob Entzes and the Bernhard Entzes were left in West Prussia.

An additional bit of information might not be needed anymore, namely that the second letter was written by Agathe Dyck Regier and her husband Jacob W. Regier.

In the ninth letter reference is made to a lady by the name of , Sara Gerbrand Schmidt. This writer is curious if she perhaps was one of the five young ladies Rev. Peter Dyck brought along from Germany when he returned from a visit to West Prussia in 1881. Some of these ladies whose names are known also married young men from the Grace Hill (Gnadenberg) Church. The statement that "she was with our brother in Sandhof" makes me think so.

Page 1

Peter Dyck Jr. to John Regier

Mt. Pleasant Iowa

September 1, 1976

Dear Cousin:

Since Brother-in-Law Bernhard's letter will not weigh the full amount we are allowed I want to add a few lines. I do not have as many travel reports to make as the others whose reports you will have read. Living in the city here can become monotonous for beside the many foot-tours we make we do not get to see the countryside. But an end will come to all this and I long for the time when a decision will be made. One thing is certain; our group here (in Mt. Pleasant) will divide for the reports are that those looking at land in Kansas have made a \$500. down-payment there. The Lord's will be done.

Those of us who remained here are occupied with learning English. Twice a week we gather to sing at Janzens (Cornelius?) . Mr. Behle, our English instructor has returned from his trip and has begun his course again. My letter to B.R. Koerz, dated August 10, will have arrived there by now. In it I included our first (English) song. I hope you will be able to read it, and after studying it to come up with a translation which our little friend J. Klassen of Simonsdorf then can rearrange to make it rhyme? The song, "Nearer my God to Thee" which you know well is sung in both German and English here to a melody that is only slightly different. We are singing the tenth song here already. This has become much easier since the brothers-in-law have returned. With the addition of new immigrants on August 28, some of whom have done some preliminary work, the number of student has gone over 20. persons. These later arrivals are very busy unpacking their chests in the houses they have rented. This latter group spent the same number of days on the ocean but experienced much more storm. But they all arrived here in good health.

Cornelius Janzen has spent the last 14 days on his farm in Nebraska together with Peter Klassen, formerly of Koldowe. While Janzen's older son Peter went to New York to meet another group of Prussians to accompany them here. The same day yet when he returned he also left for Nebraska together with J. Dyck (Montau) who, had already earned \$25. by working for a farmer here. Now I must report something about one of the foot-tours we experienced here

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page 2

Quite a large group of us walked the three-quarter mile distance to a stone quarry one afternoon. By walking along the railroad we came to this place where rocks lay in layers and are broken into with wedges. Blasting is ineffective with this type of rock. It is a very good type of rock for footings as well as for constructing the walls of houses. The same quality of stone is also to be found in some Kansas communities. Later on we came upon the stone saw. These large sheets of rock layers are cut to any size by means of a band saw which in each round of its course also passes through wet sand and water. The German operator of this business which is quite prosperous says it is very hard work and most of the time has to be done in the hot sun without much of a breeze of air. Some of these rock plates are even used as flooring.

Twice I have gone along the railroad track to bathe at a lake about about an hour away from the city. After the long walk home the enjoyment from the bath has diminished considerably. Not far from the city there is also an insane asylum. We have been there and are astonished at the magnificence of the buildings of this institution. The whole thing gives one the impression that it might just be the suburb of a city. All cooking at this place is done by steam.

On September 6 to 8 a large horse-race is scheduled to take place here. Many of the coachmen and riders are busy practicing with their horses. One German doctor brought six of his horses. One stallion worth \$2000. (two thousand)

The wool-mill here is also very interesting. The process begins with the washing of the wool on the upper story and finally on the ground floor the finished bolts of cloth are there to be admired. There are many other interesting industries like that here. T

The weather is very changeable here but mostly warm with quick temperature changes which are conducive for people to catch colds. We have more apples and pears than we can use. In spite of cooking meats three times per day. We also have carried many baskets of fruit to those friends who have none. And soon the grapes will be ripe.

Just now Uncle Hamm came with a letter from Uncle R. which included the recipe for father's foot from Dr. Berg. As you may know by now the foot has recovered completely.

Dear Cousin: Your home must be quite empty at times with so many

so many families already gone. But perhaps in a year we will all be together here.

Your father assumes we receive much mail. That is true as far as he is concerned but from the other family members we received nothing for the last three weeks, but all at once there will be much from them also. Mother thinks that by now all her children there (in Prussia) have been in Tiede a number of times by now and then when they get home again they certainly will feel compelled to write.

And now hearty greetings from me, Johannes and brother-in-law Jacob (J. W. Regier) to all our cousins and friends who remember me and don't forget your friend

Peter Dyck

J. W. & Agathe Regier to Johannes Regier

Peabody, Kansas.

Nov. 12, 1876

Dear Bro. Johannes:

We received your letter of Sept. 1 on September 25. and wish to answer it immediately. So far we have received three letters from which tell us much that interests us. Believe me, we are very anxious for news from you but this time it was three weeks since we heard from you. We are really quite alone here without relatives since Father, Brother Bernhard, and Peter (Jr.) left for Nebraska and Kansas and since our Mama, Anna, and Johannes are sick in bed we have felt quite lonesome. During this time we longed for letters very anxiously.

You write that you also have been anxiously waiting for mail from us. Have you not received all the letters or do the other family members not share their letters with you? When I am at home I write a letter every week. I have thus written to all the family except those at Tiege. To them my Agathe has written when I was not at home.

Please write oftener and in greater detail. I find the smallest detail about our old home extremely interesting.

I have translated the music of an English song here into music by numerals to send along to you. I sing the fourth pitch (bass). I want to write more next time. Greetings from Brother-in-law John (Dyck) Greetings to all the other family members.

J.W. Regier

Johannes Dyck to Johannes Regier

Peabody Kansas
Dec. 21, 1976

Dear Cousin:

Encouraged by my brother-in-law to add a few lines to what he has written I will do so even if it is nine o'clock and tell you what a typical day here is like. The time for beginning varies from 5 to 7 o'clock. As soon as Peter has started the fire in the stove I know that I must grab the milk bucket and milk the two cows unhobbled. In the meantime everything in the house is put in order and the stove-boy is called to breakfast.

Usually we went to the corn field after breakfast but that will all be harvested by sometime tomorrow. Often I have to stay behind and wash the dishes or churn butter which makes the time go very slow. After that I often make Keilchen (lumps of dough) or scrub floors.

Later I sorted the apples we had brought along from Mt. Pleasant and Jacob and Agathe peeled and sliced them. In the evening Peter fed the cattle and I milked again. After supper I had to wash the dishes again and Agathe kneaded the bread dough. Now it is ten and time for the day to come to an end.

The Christmas season is before us and we are delighted to be in a land where this holiday is also observed. Christmas trees however are very scarce and expensive. They must be brought in from a northern state. Hopefully you and the Koez cousins will be with us at that time. (Does the writer mean Christmas of 1977?) . But H. Suderman and Franz Timm are not with us anymore. They will be observing Christmas with the heavenly Choir. Hearty greetings to you, your and my family members there as well as Uncle R. (father of addressee)

Johannes Dyck

Excuse me dear cousin that I include only a small sheet. I am here in Peabody at the depot expecting Father, Brother-in-law Bernhard (Regier) and A. Klassen who are coming from Mt. Pleasant. I also wrote to A. Quiring (Lamerfeld) . He may get the letter when Suderman comes here to be a merchant in Peabody. Warm greetings from your friend and cousin

Peter Dyck

use this 4

Johannes Dyck to Johannes Regier

Peabody, Kansas

March 18, 1877

My dear Cousin Johannes Regier:

Since I have the chance to include a few lines I want to tell you a few things about our farm operation which is partly Prussian and partly American but very much alive. Two weeks ago we bought a Deere plow in Peabody for \$72.00. Since last Monday I have been sitting on it with three horses hitched ahead of it who seem to pull the same with modest effort, leaving the ground in such an appearance that we are satisfied with it. All horses here are manipulated by the use of cross-lines. When harrowing here the driver always walks behind the harrow. That seemed too monotonous for Father so he soon rearranged the harness by taking the middle part out of it on the best horse and put a saddle in place of it. Our hired man who was working on the same field with me with another team came and gave me the cross-lines of the front horses and I was on my way. But I can not use the whip while riding on that saddle then the horses want to run away. Our painter who just then came from town had to stop a while and admire our new way of doing things.

My responsibility of milking I have had to divide with our hired man. He now milks in the evening and I milk in the morning. This same man has now been within our gates since March 1. He receives \$100. from now until New Year. He is a fellow believer from the Russian Polish Mennonites. But the so-called brotherly drinking is not necessary here in America. We can be brotherly here without that.

Since seed-time continues into May here we will spend some time also hauling in building material soon. In closing your cousin sends you greetings while pleading for a speedy reply.

Johannes Dyck

Johannes Dyck to Jacob Entz

Peabody, Kansas

April 8, 1877

Dear Bro Jacob:

In spite of our busy schedule I felt the urge to write to you. This is intensified by the large amount of mail we got from you beseeching us to write oftener. So, today on the first Sunday after Easter I am determined to make a few notations and address them to you for ^I fear that my sisters with their husbands or Margard Regiers or the young people from Dr. Klassen might come to visit us and then I will write but "little" (The writer actually used the English word instead of the German "wenig".)

You, dear Bro. Jacob have a right to scold me for I see in my note book that I wrote you last on Nov. 12, 1876. I must also confess I have written twice to friend, John Dyck, And was of the opinion I had also directed that letter to you. But of such babbling back and forth this is now enough.

In America as well as in Europe we have again experienced the coming of spring and can behold how the many grasses and field crops break forth with their so strange and indescribable power. Along with them also the birds are breaking forth with their beautiful outburst of song. Also the farmers have long been in their fields with their spans of horses preparing the soil for their spring planting.

The 16 acres which we plowed before Easter and seeded to oats have for some time now been a mat of green, but the three and a half acres which we seeded to spring wheat and the 10 acres of barley still make a lesser impression. The latter two crops were only sowed on the third holiday.

The 24 acres of winter wheat which we sowed on October 30 somehow does not want to become any greener whereas the field which was sown on October 24 or earlier appear to have struck root much better. Then there are those fields which were sown earlier in September. They show very little damage by grasshoppers and are growing normally.

This grasshopper infestation has been quite variable. They we are told laid their eggs in the soil in autumn. They then hatch out after a few warm days of spring weather. Such eggs can also be found in our community. These can be cracked to make a sound similar to that of cracking a louse. Chickens and birds all eat them eagerly. We are also told that if a cold rain follows a few days after these are hatched they will all perish. That is really the kind of weather we have here---very changeable, ranging from

balmy warmth to cold wind. In the newspapers we read farmers are urged to burn their prairies after the grasshoppers are hatched. Nevertheless we have seen such fires all winter for there are those farmers who burn their excess prairie early in order to protect their buildings against uncontrollable prairie fires.

We, for instance, live near a road and have pre-burned a narrow strip earlier so that if later a fire gets away from a neighbor our farm buildings will be protected. When such a fire gets away from a neighbor during a high wind the speed the fire travels often increases but it has also been known to change directions suddenly. Other farmers protect their buildings and land by plowing a small strip near the edges. Some then plant a hedge in such plowed strips if they are on the border of their land.

To protect hay and straw stacks farmers also burn a fire-guard around these. If there is a farmer out of hay before spring he will burn a certain area earlier. This then makes the grass appear and be available a little earlier. We also burned 80 acres on the third Easter holiday. A neighbor came to help us. As we started the fire the wind was from the south but soon it came from the north. So we continued to spread the fire along the border of Brother-in-law's land so it could again crawl against wind. Soon afterward the wind blew from the east and our fire again threatened to get away from us. The fire makes such loud noises and travels so fast our neighbor said, "No horse can run that fast!" It ran until it reached the 15 strips of black overturned earth the plow had made; the fire came to a sudden halt. Some birds are able to save themselves from such a fire but many others and most rabbits perish.

Three weeks ago when our parents had gone to church on a Sunday a neighbor of Brother-in-law Bernhard started a fire on his land. That was an unwise thing to do for he thought the fire would not jump even over a single plow furrow. Just at that time I went outside and saw the whole half section of Mr. Vaughn, our neighbor and the west half of Section 4 one continuous ocean of fire. (Mr. Vaughn ultimately owned three quarters just north of the Butler Co. border.) The fire continued to burn toward Peabody for another hour and a half until it reached an area where an alert neighbor had started a back-fire. The neighbor (who started the fire?) lost one straw stack and one hay-stack.

Five weeks ago a neighbor of Johannes Harder had a fire on his field on Section 18. The wind for a long time threatened to throw the fire over

on to Harder's Section 21 but after both Johannes and Gustav (Harder) had fought the fire for a while they finally ignited Harder's side and let the "redrooster" fly over all of Section 21. The wind immediately blew the fire to include also Section 16 (all of it) and through half of Section 9. Yet it is not good to burn off all the prairie that one wants to break out in May. (No reason is given but could it be the soil would dry out too fast?)

Tye news of the fire at Suckaus in Tiege has shocked us deeply; it must have been terrible for the occupants. Our "Geschwister" ;next door to them had a very direct view how the flames burst upward out of doors and windows toward the sky. That chestnut tree most likely is gone too?

Here people are not nearly as fearful that their buildings will go up in flames for we do not have as many bad boys here as you do. Here such characters are soon exposed. There are qalso many fewer accidents here because of carelessness. If such an accident does occur it does not take long and the building is replaced here because structures are not built as durable here.

We have made little progress so far with our buildingg so I will have to report about that later. Our carpenter Kruse from Halstead who built most of the buildings of all our settlers here can only come in five weeks. Until then he has work for Dietrich Klassens. Our stone mason will come this week yet. He will probably board with our neighbor Burrus?. We will be very happy when all of our building will be finished.

Our orchard also has quite a variety of trees already. Father has planted a total of 900 trees so far. but I must tell you about other things as well.

Yes, there is much other activity on our farm. For the six horses which do not at all look emaciated we provide all kinds of diversion. My two previous letters I wrote to Tiege. At that time we had purchased two sorrels. These we traded for one brown gelding who looks almost like your light brown one but he can get just as mad as your young driving mare.

So, farewell , dear Ones and accept these few lines which I have written with many interruptions in love. Now both of the "Geschwister" are with us. Mother thought writing you one page would have been enough. Greetings to all who will read this.

Johannes Dyck.

P.S.

We expect any day now to hear when the young Sudermans and Quirings will move to their section near Newton. (Goldschar?) I have appreciated this 25 year old friend Abr. Quiring very much. We have really learned to appreciate each other during this time. I regret that they are moving farther away to Newton. We are rather far away from them to spend winter evenings together singing at Elder Leonard Sudermans who live about in the middle between us and Dr. Claassens.

The letter from all five of you there came just in time for Father's birthday. You must keep us informed about what goes on at Tiege. Our address is not "Peabody in Butler County" but Peabody near Butler County as you can see on the map.

Peabody, Kansas
May, 1878

Dear Children:

It is four weeks ago since the dreadful news of the tragedy that has befallen our sons came to us. It was with our dear friends Suderman, with whom we drove to Abraham Klassens. who very gradually informed us that an accident has happened for the horses and wagon have been discovered but not the drivers. With fear and trembling we approached the scene of the tragedy. But who does not entertain some kind of hope that the worst might not have come to pass. As I saw that violent stream and the wagon beside it; I can not describe how I felt. It still seemed to me that at least one of our sons would come out of hiding to tell us how it all happened. It all is and remains a secret to us until it will become clear to us before the throne of God.

It seems as though dear Peter must have had a little more time because he had, at least, taken off his overcoat and coat. Does that mean he tried to save himself and his brother? Peter's coat was already brought to us Thursday evening. It is that gray summer coat you all know so well. It really was our "Joseph's coat of many colors." I could not tell from the appearance of the coat whose it was for they both had one like it. The other coat and scarf have never been found. There were many people there Wednesday already who offered to help hunt for the bodies. Thursday and Friday many more came. but the water was yet too deep. It was on Friday forenoon that Grandfather Harder and his son Gustav brought dear Peter. Father came along with them. A few hours later J. R. brought Johannes. Neither of them had changed their appearance but their mouths and eyes were closed. Perhaps their lips were a little more blue than natural and a little swollen. I had not expected that their bodies would remain so natural in appearance until their burial on Saturday. Johannes was preserved a little better than Peter.

Now they rest together in one grave just as they had been together so much in their lifetime. Their graves are centrally located between us and the children and we try jointly to adorn their graves with wreaths of flowers. as well as to cry and mourn their passing for we all miss them particularly Father. Today I drew the following verse from our selection. It is Jeremiah 3: 31-35. "For the Lord will not cast off forever. But though He cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

Agathe Dyck

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Catherine Regier to Abraham Regier Sr.

Peabody, Kansas

Jan 25, 1880

Dear Father: (in law)

This time I will try again to add a little to my dear Abraham's letter. It seems to me that the closer the time you, dear Father, will be in our midst comes the lazier we become about writing to you. I repeat what Sister -in-law Anna of Sandhof once said, "We will make it all right when we get together.

Yesterday we celebrated Mother's birthday. It was a beautiful family festival. Besides family members we also had Uncle and Aunt Abraham Sudermans, the Grandparents Harders, and Joh. Harders as guests. Uncle Suderman gave an appropriate meditation and offered prayer. The Sudermans have become very close friends to us here.

Mother's health has improved much lately and she looks considerably better than a month ago. At that time we advised her to begin treatment against dropsy before the disease would become too entrenched in her body, but she contended she still had no pain or discomfort and therefore did not care for medical treatment. But Sister Marie's little Bernhard (B.P.) has not completely recovered yet. He has a hard swelling around one ear. very likely a swollen gland for he has also had a sore throat for some time and can not move his head as he would like.

Our Agathe fared much better this time reciting her poem for the birthday than in previous years. This time she could observe the Bergman girls show her how such a thing is done, and that helped more than all our coaxing and drilling. Bergman's Tienchen and Mariechen both recited rather well at Mother's birthday.

Your photograph---dear Father, that you sent some time ago made us all very happy. It is as you say, you look considerably healthier now. Do you have the same coat on in both pictures? On the first picture the coat hangs much looser than on the second.

I hardly know what to advise you to make your trip here more comfortable for you can get all that information also from friend Gustav. Include a (Harder?)

a lot of woolen socks in your hand baggage , also woolen shirts. This year we are busy sewing some very queer looking shirts. Our Prussian shirts are all worn out even for Brother-in-law Johannes. Sister Anna, do not make many multi-colored linen clothes for your Cornelius (C. H. R.) but rather use loose cotton cloth fabric. The sweat just does not come out of linen garments when we wash them here and they are less desirable than what we buy here. That we have experienced.

Also dark bed-linen is very scarce here since all Americans use only white sheets and and pillow cases and cover themselves with layer upon layer of cotton blankets; as many as five in the winter. If I am in good health I want to lay in a good supply of cotton blankets also for our future guests. We sisters often plan how we will accomodate all of you when you come. another five months and with the help of God we will be there that far.

Mother had mail from all of you on her birthday. Agathe wishes to tell Grandpa that she and Uncle Suderman will come together to Peabody to get you from the train depot. In closing we send greetings from all of the family members and nieces. Agnes sends greetings to her friend Sara. May the dear Saviour keep you in his grace until we meet again.

Your children

Abraham and Catherine Regier.

Agathe and Peter Dyck to Children in Prussia

Peabody, Kansas

Feb. 1, 1884

Dearest Children:

We greet you in the name of God and in the name of Christ for the salvation of our undying souls at the beginning of this new year. ¹¹Pray He continue His good work in all our souls through His Holy Spirit to the praise, honor, and glory of His holy name.

First, about our physical health. Mother has been ill since Jan. 20. and her symptoms are similar to the time she suffered from Jaundice for her skin color has been quite yellow. We had the doctor here three times. On his last visit yesterday he said her condition would improve soon. Since Mother felt that having guests on her birthday would be too strenuous for her I informed Abraham Entz to inform the Regiers at Newton to visit us at a later date.

As a result only the two couples, Bernhard Regiers, and Abraham and Mariechen Entz without children and of the Gurken Regiers, the mother and Bernhard came. In the evening only the children who live near here came. There were no disturbances by children because none came.

During the same time, I suffered a lot from coughing and hoarseness. The latter is quite a hindrance to me in my calling, in fact, I find it quite difficult to preach every 14 days. But the Lord will help me and I hope my mouth will be in order by then. We received your dear letter in time for the birthday. I also want to report that Bernhard Regier and a neighbor drove to Iowa to buy some red stocker cattle. They are supposed to be cheaper there and from there he wants to come home via Osawatomie Kansas to visit his brother Johannes there of whom it was reported that he has improved some. That he ever will recover completely seems doubtful, to us but with God nothing is impossible.

Dear Bernhard: (Entz) Since our hardware store building in Peabody burned down on January 8 along with 8 other buildings I may have to replace it with a rock building unless I sell the building site to someone else. This building was 80 by 18 feet on a lot 25 feet wide and earned \$25.00 per month rent. The original cost of it was \$1900.00. I only re-

ceived \$600.00 insurance at the time since the real estate being in the middle of the lot was valued at ---

ceived \$600.00 insurance at that time since the lot being in the middle of the block was valued at \$15 00.00. Since I might have to rebuild I would ask you to instruct Martens there to send all my free money (liquid assets) to me and to keep an accurate account of the amount in that savings account.

You may have heard that two new ministers have been elected in our Emmaus Church and two weeks later they were installed (ordained) into office, namely Eduard Claassen and Gustav Harder. From our end only Jacob Regier and our Herman went. (Janzen). I was quite sick at the time but I would not have gone anyway. May the Lord bless both of them with his power from above that they become competent proclaimers of the Word. May he anoint them with his Holy Spirit through his grace.

Yesterday Elder Ewert from Brudertal was with us. He had come from the school at Halstead, also brother-in-law Bernhard Regier (from Newton) and a few of our children joined in to discuss some of our church matters. In the near future there is to be a church dedication in another group (of Mennonites) near here. At that time our situation here will also come up for discussion by the Elders who will attend. May the Lord grant that their decision will be to his glory.

Yesterday was the first day Mother remained out of bed all day since her illness. She is enjoying her breakfast at my writing desk and remarked how good the food tastes.

We still have our 12 fat cattle. Recently we were offered five and one fourth cents per pound for them. In Prussian money this would be about \$100.00 per head. In all things this has been a very good year for us with crops like never before. Greetings to the other children there. From your continually loving parents.

Agathe and Peter Dyck

Agathe Dyck to the children in Prussia
Bernhard Entzes in particular

Peabody, Kansas
Nov. 10, 1884

Dear Children:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you and your household. it is a long time since we should have written you and the Vierzehnhubeners (Jacob Entzes) but if one does not get serious about it the many duties which pile up in autumn make valid excuses.

We did get some oral greetings from you for Sister-in-law Esau and her son and H. Klassens have visited us. We have not yet met with the Toews and C. Klassen families.

We received the last letter from you in the beginning of August. We had also hoped there would be some word from you when those girls arrived but this did not materialize. One of these girls, Auguste Wormeck, is in service here with us. She acted somewhat strange at first but is adjusting nicely now.

During the last summer I spent considerable time with the children at the time of the births of their infants. Praise God they are all doing well again. Even Marie Entz (Mrs. Abraham Entz) remarked, "Even if I am recovering slower I have had no relapse. at the Cornelius Regier home a daughter, Magdalene Gertrude, was born on October 14. Both Mother and daughter are doing well. Only that little Gerhard (son of Abraham and Catherine Regier) is a source of anxiety to us, and particularly to his parents. Father has written about it and Abraham will also.

We must also report a death among our acquaintances namely, Mrs. Sara Schmidt nee Gerbrand who in Prussia was with our brother in Sandhof. Three years ago while at the Johannes Regiers home she married a man from the Gnadenberg Church. She died nine hours after giving birth to a child in full faith in her Saviour. Brother Abraham and his wife were present at the death-bed. She had previously often spoken about her imminent death. Four doctors were present at the delivery.

Of the passing of Grandmother Penner Anna has written you. She, at the time we visited her ten days ago informed us, "I will not see you again in this life. May the Lord grant us a happy reunion before his throne through his grace.

Since the passing of this friend I am the oldest woman in our Butler County settlement which means the Lord is reminding me, "Set your house in order for you must die." We are all healthy only I must guard against catching cold and often have cold feet. The weather has been very pleasant with only a few nights of frost yet.

The larger children (grandchildren) are all well as near as I know and even diarrhea was kept under control this summer. Willie (Entz) who was quite ill for a time caused his mother a lot of extra work. He always wanted her to come fast when he needed something, by day or by night. Now he is weaned, is gaining weight and is beginning to speak.

What are your children doing? I hope Herman is not again at Goerzingen to fit on another corset? Where does Gerhard attend school? How does he respond to his studies? Your little Gustav we heard favors his cousin Bernhard.

Apples have done real well for us this year. Cornelius and Jacob have the most here. At Cornelius they picked 17 bushels from two trees. A bushel of apples sells for one dollar. Our neighbors Borns has very many apples also. We have enough for our own use and are happy for our many varieties but they are none of the old familiar ones.

We have not been with the children at Hewton since the middle of October. Abraham came here once with his children while we were visiting at the Harders. (Gustav) We regret that very much for we do not get together very often. What are they doing at Vierzehnhuben? Greet them (Jacob Entzes) from us. We have not heard from them lately.

So, farewell, A letter from you would be very welcome. Greetings to all who remember your mother and Grandmother.

Agathe Dyck

Peter Dyck letters 1876-1884 to family in Germany and reports from 1881 European trip

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Foreword

This is an attempt to make a collection of letters which my forbears on my mother's side, with a few exceptions wrote from their new home south of Peabody, Kansas to relatives remaining in West Prussia, Germany. Because of the age of the manuscripts, and the fact that much of the material was written on the back side of business stationery, old envelopes, and in one instance on the back side of a brochure of the J.J. Krehbiel Carriage Factory of Newton, Kansas, the words were so hard to decipher that I had to make a copy of the original first before one could think of translation from German into English.

Best it is not clear yet I will state my concern once more in other words. The source of this material is not the actual letters which members of the Peter Dyck family sent to Germany but copies of the manuscript which was sent to the family members remaining in Germany. That is the only way I can explain the fact that these messages were written on such second hand paper. I am willing to concede that my great-grandfather was a thrifty, frugal, and resourceful person, but I am not yet ready to admit he was also stingy. I feel that he thought a copy for future reference could be made on just about anything.

This material fits into numerous categories. First there is the general category of reporting on the beginning of farming operations in a new land. Several letters deal with the tragedy of the drowning of the Dyck's two sons the rescue of their bodies from the river bed and the subsequent funeral of Peter and Johannes Dyck. A third grouping might include the letters which deal with the travel of Rev. Peter Dyck to his former home in Germany and the visit to his relatives in and near the city of Samara, Russia. Still another crucial topic is the formation of the group of settlers in the north-west corner of Butler County who erected their own house of worship which later came to be known as the Zion Mennonite Church. After the erection of this small church a difficulty with Leonard Suderman, Elder of the Emmaus Church became an issue inasmuch as Rev. Suderman refused to serve Communion to this group who felt a separate house of worship, because the Emmaus Church was just too far away for them, particularly in cold weather. A logical conclusion to this assortment of letters might be the "Last Will and Testament of Peter Dyck."

The first letter is an exception to the rule in that it was written by Mrs. Abraham (Catherine) Regier, daughter of Rev. Dyck from Herrnhagen, West Prussia, but it deals with plans for their coming to the United States. The fact that Rev. Dyck wrote some of his travelogue while in Russia might also constitute an exception. Where these exceptions occur, adequate explanation will be given.

+ the need for.

Herrnhagen
 March, 28, 1877

Dear;y Beloved Parents:

Many thanks for the dear letters we received from you today. Most of all we are gratified to learn that Brother-in-law Jacob (J.W.R.) wants to come (to New York) and meet us. It makes me feel that part of my load is already lifted, inasmuch as this will be a help in overcoming the language barrier.

Now dear parents, we are in Holy (Good Friday) Week. May the faithful God grant us a true Good-Friday and Easter blessing. On the third Easter holiday we will observe your birthday. We want to thank the Lord that he has granted this day to you and us, through his grace in the hope that we will soon be united again.

I think it would be good if we would not need to live so far apart in America. Then we would not so often have to be absent from family gatherings because of bad roads as it so often was the case here. Perhaps it would even be better if we could come to you on foot. Presently the roads here are practically impossible, but the foot-paths are dry.

Last week we spent almost two days in Tiege. We visited Uncle Rahn B. and the Schultz home in Ratenhoff. Uncle and Aunt there send greetings to all of you there. We found rather genuine hospitality there. Mrs. Rahn in Tiege is still in very bad shape due to her ailment of long standing. She was too weak to attend her brother's wedding at Netteig in Uncle Wiebe's home. We went to the wedding together with Father, but would have felt better if we would have stayed at home. It was a wedding according to the new fad in the wildest (Saus und Braus) revelry and carousing.

The Schultz Family in Ratenhoff experienced severe grief recently. Schulz's brother in Burwalde lost his wife recently due to Pneumonia, and another M. Schulz in Petershagen also lost a wife rather suddenly due to the same cause.

We are all very healthy and happy, praise be to God. Recently we visited at Vierzehnhuben (the Jacob Entz home) and also spent the night there. If our little Bernhard were still living this would not have been possible, for we could not have been on the road that long. The ice passage, it seems will not create a problem this time. The crest is now and the water level is extremely low.

May the Lord watch over you. The heartiest greetings from us and Father (Regier) to all of you who seem so far away. Your loving children

Abraham and Catherine Regier

A letter with no Beginning , approximately 1977-78

Brother-in-law L. and K. inquire about bringing money over to the United States. When we emigrated we exchanged our German money for American greenbacks. (yes, Dyck used the term greenbacks in his German letter) Since that time it has become possible also to exchange gold for American money but the rate of 13 to one which prevailed then has fallen some.

The United States bonds which I purchased in Prussia at the time; with a 1881 and 1885 expiration dates, I have since then exchanges for local bonds of four year maturity. These are tax-exempt a concession which is equal to about two percent.

Other forms of income from abroad, I have invested in seven percent railroad which yield seven percent and some school bonds which yield ten percent interest. Mr. C.B.Schmidt, the Santa Fe agent also sells Topeka municipal bonds which yield seven percent interest. Investors in farm mortgages receive as much as ten percent.

And now dear Friends, my advice would be that when you emigrate you do not pre-determine in which community you will settle down before you are here. although you will have to designate whether your baggage is to be unloaded at either Peabody or Newton. There is plenty of room here with us or with our married children, for all of us have houses large enough to accommodate a reasonable amount of visitors, particularly in the summer. So please bring your families under our roof first, and then you can make further plans.

Of all our group here we live the nearest to a town, only six miles from Peabody while Bro Dietrich Claassen lives 18 miles from the nearest town. It makes a decided difference here where the wages of hired help are relatively high whether one can make one or two trips per day to market the precious crops our dear Lord has blessed us. What I am saying is, "Do not buy a farm too far away from a market for your products. So far Peabody always pays a higher price for wheat than either Newton or Halstead, and when buying supplies the prices are always a little more reasonable in Peabody. There are numerous merchants here so that a healthy competition prevails between them.

We are in good health, also our children, only at Abraham Regiers, their little Agathe (my mother) has a throat ailment, a type of Catarrh combined with fever. We do not know what outcome the Lord has chosen for this ailment which is the same she often had in Herrnhagen already. There have been numerous instances of Diphtheria here among infants and adults, and some die from it. It can also be reported that a son Abraham has arrived at the Regier home. (could it be A.H.Regier born on Nov.16, 1878?)

A few days ago young Dietrich Brucks, formerly Diebau, was here to bid us farewell before sailing for Prussia. He possibly is there by now. He also has bought a farm in our settlement and will probably settle on it when he returns in the fall.

And now I want to give a short synopsis of our farm, since I have reported nothing so far. We have 400 acres (an acre is 160 square rods) Our land lies on two levels. We found a house on it (24 by 16 feet) and a barn. We have since then added a 30 by 20 foot annex to the house. The farm also included two mules, two good cows, and nine hogs, partly fattened, a mowing machine, other farm and garden implements. The former owner packed all he wanted to take along into two boxes. For all this we paid \$4400.00. Since then we have spent another \$2600. making a total of \$7,000.00. Our present inventory is seven horses, 23 head of cattle, about 55 hogs, We sowed 70 acres of wheat 60 acres of Wlsch-Corn, 15 acres of oats, and two acres of potatoes. These were very good last year. We still have 1200 bushels of wheat in the bin.

Heartly greetings to you, your dear wife, and children, the son-in-law whom we have not met yet from Anna, and Peter and Agathe Dyck who love you dearly.

Two Sons drown

On the day of this tragedy Brother Abr. Suderman and Bro. Abraham Claassen and I had agreed to come together for the noon meal and then in the afternoon we planned to assess all the members of our fellowship. Upon arrival we learned that Claassen had spent most of the forenoon looking for our sons but without success. A little later someone came to Sudermans to report there had been an accident at the creek, the horses had been found but not the drivers. We drove to the scene at once, Suderman had preceded us to the place. Many American neighbors had gathered by then and were anxiously hunting for our dear sons in the water. At that point I offered a sum of money and the search gained momentum. Men used long hooks, canoes, and rafts. This activity then continued all through the next day Thursday and on Friday the water level had fallen sufficiently that men could wade in the creek bottom in solid formation touching the bottom of the channel. Even though this all happened on Wednesday, the first of May, it was at noon on Friday that the bodies were discovered about 50 rods below the ford at which they had tried to cross the stream.

The watches which the sons had with them both stopped at 7:30. At that time the stream had been 12 feet deep. The horses swam to the left and a farmer who had seen the accident reported he had still seen the load of lumber afloat and a dark object was still at the top of the load, very likely Peter's overcoat. This coat never was recovered. He always made decisions faster and we presume that he hurriedly shed garments when he saw what was about to happen for we found him without either coat while Johannes perished with both coats on, and that is how we found them. They were not very good swimmers, having had very little practice. This in essence is what happened, but how does the inner man relate to such tragedy befalling one's dear children?

It was very difficult when we returned home Wednesday evening to bring the news to Anna and to our three married children. Deep sorrow and a flood of tears ensued; Where and how does one find comfort in a time such as this? But the Lord immediately revealed himself to us to our hearts through his word and spirit. It was from the word of God that we could draw grace upon grace. For in such moments when our God pours out the bitter cup of sorrow, he is also there with us inasmuch as we were willing to follow him to his Golgotha. If we are willing to follow he then pours new feelings of salvation into our souls.

Yes, this poor man cried and the Lord helped him out of all his troubles. I was in dire need of comfort and he took pity on my soul that it might not perish. Oh, it is a precious time when one feels the real presence of Christ, and the heart can just submerge itself into his salvation completely. In the wounds of Christ, one finds for every emergency, a shelter from danger in every emergency.

At that time we also saw how genuine the sympathy which our American neighbors extended to us was. This was unusually evident at the day of the funeral when people from a great distance had come to join us in the pilgrimage to the grave site, where our dear sons are resting awaiting the great day of Resurrection.

Now I want to share something on the inner spiritual condition of our children during the last period of their lives. Our God who can see in secret can also guide human hearts like the babbling brooks, providing one has an attitude of repentance and submission.

The matter mentioned in the last paragraph is not in this collection of letters.

Peabody , 1879

Dear Uncle , Aunt, and Children:

At the outset we wish you, before anything else, grace, salvation, Blessings in body and soul, and the peace which passes all understanding keep your hearts in Christ. Amen

Since my dear wife is writing to you, and usually is the encourager as far as letter-writing is concerned, I can do nothing less, than add a few lines also. Much rather I would be among you, to converse with you, particularly about all that has happened during our absence from you. Yes, the dear Lord led us through difficult times last year through the death of our dear sons who are not with us anymore. They are with the Lord, as we confidently hope for it was He who arranged the circumstances according to his will. Things just had to happen in this way. It is He who holds us in his hand and guides us.

It had to rain over an area several miles wide the evening before so that this stream flooded while all tributaries received very little water. They drove through this stream the day before when there was but very little water in it about like it usually was when we drove to Abraham Claassens, who formerly lived at Simonsdorf.

This the Lord has done. His will had to be fulfilled. He could have prevented it if he had caused that kind of thoughts to enter their minds. Had he granted our sons an awareness of danger this would not have happened. It becomes hard just to submit to the will of the Lord, but our faith is rewarded by it. Immediately after this happened the Lord handed us a cup of bitter pain, then the night came and we were to lie down to sleep as usual, but after after falling asleep we woke up time and again, and his grave continually took our mind's eye to Golgatha to the height of anguish and its highest degree of pain, and only there could we find comfort. Then the atmosphere surrounding our hearts became sweet and light, and we could submit to the heavy grief he had sent us. Yes we had strong misgivings about ourselves but His comfort revived our souls. For if we looked around us there was "no sorrow like our sorrow. But the Lord heard this cry and helped us out of all our troubles, and those in deep trouble he brings to his own home. All this was accomplished by placing our faith in the bloody merit of our Saviour. And when temptations or trials came after that we always experienced the willingness to go to Golgatha, and our hearts again found rest.

It was a time in which one could be more thankful for tribulation than for good days. In retrospect it was a blessed time for our Lord was with us. And when we longed for his presence, he was already there, and placed words of Holy Writ on our lips and this became the balm for our souls.

But the question still remains, "Does the Lord want me to make this trip?" My will is not supposed to run ahead, but rather follow, or stand back. The Psalmist says, "I do thy will gladly," since we stand in the faith we also pray in faith and do not waver, is what James said. And our Lord says, "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, you may ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you, and so we have the thing we asked for. For we know the Lord hears us.

And so we trust the Saviour will also reveal to our hearts what we are to do and what we ought to leave undone, because we surrender ourselves to him. Then we can speak with Moses, "If thy presence does not go before us lead us not from thence." The Lord also said in another instance, "I, the Lord am with thee whithersoever thou goest and will bring thee again into this land.

If in due time I should feel that I can proceed joyfully, and the Lord does not place obstacles into my path, but rather points out the way, I might well be the travel-companion of these brethren. In that event we would entrust ourselves to the Lord's protecting hand, providing you also join in the intercession for us.

Friend Eduard Claassen plans to leave on the 25th of April. To me this appears to be a little early. Bro. Suderman feels the same way about it. For we all have very many arrangements to make, and domestic matters to order and all of this takes time.

We want to do as the Lord wills and make the final decision after the engagement so that travel plans can be consummated. It is likely we will leave soon after the wedding, and as we hope, the period of engagement might be short. If it takes us too long to get ready and Bro. Eduard Claassen can not wait it is likely I will come later with Eduard Claassen and Bro. Suderman. But above all things we want to do as the Lord wills, for we want to rest at peace with him, and our poor souls need this assurance badly, particularly at the time of a long journey, with its many dangers.

Finally hearty greetings to all of you, and the dear Ones in Vierzehnhuben, and those in Tragheim from Anna and your everloving parents.

Agathe and Peter Dyck

Spring of 1881

At Emmaus Church

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

As you all may know by now, I have decided, the Lord willing and we are still alive then, to make a trip to our old Fatherland in the hope of enjoying the privilege of visiting our children and many other dear brothers and Sisters in peace and to greet them from us.

However, since I have the calling of proclaiming the word of God to our fellowship at this holy place it behooves me to ask if I may absent myself for a period of about three months. I ask this on the assumption that our dear Elder would arrange for some one to proclaim the gospel on the Sundays allotted to me either by engaging a guest minister or by taking my place, thus enabling me to carry out my plan.

But there is another matter which causes me even greater concern and that is this; "Will we ever see each other face to face again? Whatever the Lord conceals from us he does not reveal to us, just as it was during the time the Lord took our two sons from us. No one even dreamed that such an accident could happen, and yet he ordered it and it did happen. Our Loved ones were not with us anymore and before we knew it they were with the Lord.

Should I and my travel colleagues meet a similar tragic end? Only the Lord knows and whatever the outcome might be; he has already decided.

Knowing this we want to cling to our Saviour's hand, trusting that he will not send us tragedy, but rather protect us from such a thing happening, for whoever knows how to walk hand in hand with the Lord is safe, and need not despair, and will not perish even in adversity. My heart has this confidence and, I trust, my travel-companions have the same assurance, that should the peril overtake us, we trust our God to let his face shine upon us in times of distress as before.

Now, dear Ones, it might not be possible for me to shake the hand of every one of you, still one thing I would beg of you, for the sake of my own inner peace, for when one begins a journey, it is always well to, commit one's own heart and home to the Lord in good days, as well as, in one's final hour. And so it behooves me to ask, "Have I insulted anybody? If so, I beg of you dear brother or sister forgive me, for I want to be free of any chains of sin that might cause me to cling to this world. I do not know outright of any such instance, but if there should be I extend my hand wholeheartedly to such a brother. So please take me and my travel-companions into your heart and intercede for us, for the prayer of faith availeth much if spoken in sincerity.

So we bid you farewell, in the Lord, and with the hope of seeing all of you again when we return, and should it be that it might be the will of the Lord to call one of you to himself, for such a one I ~~do~~ covet that life of faith, which results in the divine peace which comes to all who experience the forgiveness of sins, and which our Lord grants so willingly.

Oh, how much a believing heart yearns for its Lord and Saviour, to be with him eternally. In that way our righteousness by faith can become also a righteousness of life and thus we can and thus we can breathe freely until our Lord comes and takes us into his eternal dwelling place. May the Lord grant this through his grace. Receive the benediction.

Peabody, April 6, 1881

Very dear Children:

Looking up to our Lord we bless and praise him for the grace that has been given us in this Passion season, so that we can again delight in his goodness, that out of love toward us, he has obtained this bloody righteousness for us, in which we believe and by which we are saved.

Please, all of you, excuse me that in recent times I have been rather slow in letter writing, but if I confess this, you will undoubtedly expect me to improve myself, for presently there are sufficient pressing reasons, to give you new information, so I herewith announce that Anna has decided to change her present status, for that young Herman Janzen whom you know son of that dear Johann Janzen formerly from Lupshorst, is asking for her hand.

And this matter has progressed so far that, the Lord willing, their engagement will be celebrated this coming Friday, the day after tomorrow, on the eighth of April.

We have sought the Lord's will in this matter, and have asked him, that he may reveal the same to us, for without his approval we do not care to take one single step. That is why we are beseeching all of you who have our best interest at heart to make this a matter of vital concern, in the coming days that the Lord may be the constant companion of these two, that God may bless their union to the salvation of their souls, and that the kingdom of God may profit from this union. May the Lord grant this through his grace.

On the third of April, we had quite a large gathering here for my birthday. Besides all our children, our brother-in-law Abr. Regier, Cor. Regiers family, Brother-in-law, Bernhard Regier from Newton, his son Johannes and Bro. Abr. Suderman came. The latter also remained here for the night. Bro. Suderman continued from here to his farm to make various arrangements with his renter there who is from the Michaliner (Grqcehill) group. He also is not ill disposed to the idea of travelling to Europe this spring together with Br. Eduard Claassen and his wife, and probably also include a trip to southern Russia, where his three sisters and other friends reside.

Upon hearing about all of this, I myself became interested to take part with this group in this venture for in the meantime I have been thinking, if it be the Lord's will to visit our fatherland once more, for as long as one has children and brothers and sisters, and many other friends there is the urge to see them once more in my lifetime.

Consequently, it may just happen that, since our household will increase by one member in the near future, that I can entrust my farm operation to a proxy (Stellvertreter) since I anticipate getting such a person.

the following was printed on the margin

Dear Bernhard (Entz) Yesterday we received the letter which also contained our final settlement sheet, but so far I have not had time to look through the same. So can just say, thanks, at this point. At some later date I will write more about it for I must go to Peabody today yet. Yesterday we also received letters from Vierzennhuben and Tragheim. Thanks, again for the messages of greeting for my birthday. May the Lord help us further.

No date or other details given so
so it might as well have happened while Petr Dyck was on his way to Russia?

During the past week our Bernhard Regier, in company with one of our American neighbors made a trip to Iowa, a state north-east of here, to buy young breeding stock, where a young bull costs as much as \$200. and more. Since the bulls were all so expensive they came home with a cow and her calf.

bought

On the way home he came via Osawatomie, to visit his brother John, with home he could make but little contact because of his insane condition. Because his condition has worsened John spoke but little and then with such a soft voice that he could not be understood, and what could be understood was not coherent. May the Lord give him grace that he may have, at least, a few clear moments in which he can coordinate his senses, so that we might entertain the hope of being healed some day for at this time there is very little reason to hope for recovery, unless the Lord performs a miracle.

Our farming operation is on this wise now. We have formed a partnership with our children, Herman and Anna, which requires that record be kept of all income and expenses. We had a blessed harvest this year, 3058 bushels of wheat, over 900 bushels of oats and enough corn to fatten 12 steers since October 8 and all other bins are full of corn also. The steers will be marketed this month yet. They are sold to be marketed at \$5.30 per hundred and will weigh about 1400 pounds each. We have nine horses and two colts, 40 hogs, and about another 85 head of cattle beside the steers mentioned earlier.

We had often hoped to hear from Bernhard Harder at Heubuden, please dear brother-in-law please inform him that we request a letter, for we hear so little about my sister's children, and even less about the deceased Maria, formerly in the Institution at Krohnsitz. Even our brother at Altenau wrote us that Friend Harder would give us more detailed information about the more recent events in her life prior to her decease, including her physical and spiritual condition. And please convey greetings from us when you remind him of his obligation.

We thank the Lord for all tokens of grace which he has granted to all of us here in this new homeland, to him be the glory. He sustains us physically and spiritually. What more do we want? We want to love him as long as we live. May the Lord grant it in his grace.

Greetings to either a church in Prussia or to a group in Samara, Russia.

Through God's grace and mercy we are able to appear in a number of your (Lirchliche) congregations and to greet you with the usual greeting of peace, "Grace be with you and peace from him who is, who was, and who is to come; from Jesus Christ who is the true witness who has loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

Yes, dear Ones, we rejoice at the privilege to see you face to face once more, for we remember most of you from the time you lived in our fatherland, and for a time were in the same fellowship, and some of you came here about the same time we arrived there. Yes, we are related, and that is even more true if we live in love toward one another in our Oneness in Christ.

God be praised for all the grace, we want to exalt his name, and spread his praise also before this congregation. Having said this, let us now proceed to the scheduled Sunday Service.

A short paragraph which seems to fit nowhere: so it comes here

In unserer Nachbarschaft nichts Neues als das unsere Nachbars Frau Entz
There is not other news in our community than that our neighbor Entz's wife
has been ailing for some time from a weakness in her stomach. Her condition
is such that from our way of looking at it she is nearing her end. Recently
she has submitted herself to a Homopathic type of treatment and seems some
what improved. We will miss her as a neighbor and the children certainly would
miss their mother severely. And now dear family members accept these few words
in love. My dear wife and children beg, "Add to our joy by writing us.

Your friend and brother

_____ Dyck

Dear Congregation: Through the grace and mercy of God I today appear in
your Kirchliche) G^Emeinschaft (non M.B. churches?) and greet you with the
familiar words, "Grace be with you, and peace from him who is, who was, and
is to come, and from Jesus Christ who is the true witness, and has loved us
and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

Now that I have been in your midst a while, and many of us have been able
to look at each other, it has been my delight, since we formerly were very
close to each other and loved each other (one another) to accept the in-
vitation of the dear brother to proclaim to you the word of God. And thus
I have allowed myself to step into this holy place, if it be the Lord's will,
to share something with you for the upbuilding of your inner selves and to
contribute, if possible, something toward the upbuilding of your faith, in
the hope the Lord will bless these efforts.

Now that the dear Lord so graciously has led me to you from our new home
land my mind has been concerned, "How will you come close to the folks in your
homeland? while on the long journey and then again overland? Will the Lord
bring you to then safely? That is why I was burdened deeply, at the outset,
"Does the Lord really want me to make this journey? and that his holy will
might prevail in this matter. We earnestly prayed for all this.

And so the mercy of God has graciously brought me to this hour over a long
distance on water and land if ~~in~~ all this has to be mingled with a little
bitterness along the way, the grace to overcome it was there at all times, as
our advocate to bring us back to the right track.

We can report that all has fallen back into shape so that we can only thank
the Lord for all he has done for our souls and our bodies.

Having said this to you dear Ones, let us proceed to the worship service
of the morning.

(very likely a response to a welcome in a church in
Germany or Russia. Pardon if the following is being repeated.

Dear Bernhard: Yesterday we received the letter containing a final settle-
ment sheet. So far I have not had time to thoroughly study it., but I
at least, want to thank for the same, but comment on it later. Since I need
to go to Peabody this afternoon I do not have time now. There also were let-
ters from Vierzehnhuben and from Tragheim yesterday. Thanks also for the gree-
ting for my birthday. May the Lord continue to help us.

A Farewell Message

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

Acknowledging that God's mercy has been over us while with you, the time has now arrived that my companion and I must prepare to return to our homes, I am continually plagued by the thought in my heart, that this is the last time that we will see each other face to face. Inasmuch as we reside so far apart, and my health and advancing age the days may soon be here of which the Psalmist says, "I have no pleasure in them". So it seems safe to think that I will not meet you dear brothers and Sisters again. This is the last time. But as the Lord wills in this matter.

That seems to me should be all the more reason for us to focus our attention on the other side, to the shores of eternity, where we all so very much would love to arrive some day, inasmuch as keep the faith. Therefore, my beloved-- be courageous in the Lord. We do not want to cast sharp glances at others of our neighbors asking, "Will I meet you there in that blessed eternity? but let us rather be more concerned about ourselves that we escape eternal perdition by working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Could it be that some poor sojourner of my associates reach the door to eternal life and I must remain behind and languish eternally?

What a miserable fate, dearly beloved, sometime when our pilgrimage ends to hear, "You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting." So let us watch and pray and claim the blood of Christ as our ransom, it covers all our shortcomings. That assures us peace, both now and when we meet our judge. This present time is for us the time of grace with the doors of heaven standing open and we must pursue the one thing needful for time and eternity. So let us believe, and take to heart the admonition to let Christ reconcile us to God. For God is love and this love wants to embrace us, while on our earthly pilgrimage even if the road goes through thorns and thistles, we remain near the Lord and will not forsake him, for it is good to be with him, he wants us all to be saved, because "faith is the victory", which has overcome the world in us, over us, and around us.

And finally we want to thank you, dear Ones, for all the love and hospitality you have shown us, and we could enjoy, and also beseech you to enfold this rather unassuming friend and brother, as well as my travel-companions in your intercession before the Lord. As oft as you pray, include us also that our journey may be a joyous one and that our dear Saviour who is the mediator between us and God may protect us on our dangerous journey. May the Lord grant it by his grace. Amen.

And now may we sum this all up in the prayer our Lord taught us.

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and for give us our debts and we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

Amen

Receive yet the benediction.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord cause his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, and grant you his peace. Amen.

Five disconnected excerpts about visits in the homes in Samara Province

Herewith I acknowledge the letter from you which you sent on June 27. It had come to Widow Harder in the same package with the one from Bro-in-law Sukkau which Bernhard Entz forwarded to me here. Dear Mama, you write about a very unusual star. I saw the same star when I was at Tiege. It was about at midnight that I saw it and it was to the north from here and had a short sword attached to it. Here in the colonies the rye harvest is on. Bro.-in-law went to Roschke today in the hope of finding reapers. The oats are not ripe yet, but have very long straw that is quite reddish. 24A

One of the neighbors here is a fellow-preacher whom I possibly should have visited, but since he is reported to be ailing, in that he has a severe trembling of his limbs, and since he has the problem that he rather is absent from people than with them, I have neglected visiting him. He appears nowhere, not even in church because he thinks all people will stare at him and he can not stand that. From Sukkaus we made a trip to the Epps. These have five children, there we enjoyed our evening meal, they have a well arranged farm, the oldest daughter has finished school, and the youngest child is a boy, they have a well tended garden. 25

A kind of large tuber which they call Rosa potatoes (sweet potatoes, yams?) The Russian workhorses are considerably skinny, and the cattle smaller than either in America or Prussia, and the grass here is also shorter. The grass on the Steppes is more delicate than ours, almost more like clover, and the weeds very much resemble the weeds of Prussia.

Saturday, on the 30th of July I stayed at the home to prepare myself to give the Sunday sermon. Then in the evening they took me to their grazing land which I had not seen yet, and from there we called on Neighbor Martens. His wife is a Franz Epp daughter from Schoen see. They have seven living children. Then on Sunday I went to church with my family members and I was asked to lead the worship. I spoke about "The sinful nature of man and the kingdom of God. 25B

On this day I drove to Brother Ewert who lives in Marienthal, they have a full-grown son Heinrich, and a half-grown daughter, Auguste, then a little son, Wilhelm who is of school age and has lost a thumb, and one son is in the Molotschna Colony.

After this visit we drove to Heinz Ganzens of Nierau who is the Overseer of the colony. There were many guests at this home, also that old Mrs. Wiebe from Freierhufen, also her children. We enjoyed the evening meal, but before that we also toured the garden, where several apple trees were loaded with fruit, it was the same way at Duerksens, the garden of the latter family is even larger, and beyond it a nice forest. 26

There we were all together Friend Epps and Friend Claassens, their children brothers and others with whom they have intermarried, also a daughter of the Steins, who has married a Claassen, also a daughter of Friend Harder, who is married to a Pet. Claassen. Friday was the last day before our farewell on which we planned to do any visiting elsewhere before our farewell. So in the forenoon we called on the Widow Harder. She has a very complete farm and five children living. She knows very well how to conduct herself as a widow, and is unusually able to verbalize any of her plans. After our hap we drove to Jacob Sukkaus yet, they have her parents with them, the Dycks from Bareskamp, with four sons and four daughters. Their farm is rather weak but they have recently bought some land. 26B

Pardon, if these sketches are not in the right order.

Since the translator of these letters does not know Russian geography it is not clear whether these isolated incidents always are given in the right order, nor if they occurred on the way to or from Samara.

Our trip to Samara from the colony (Molotschna?) was without incident until we came to a certain village where many reapers (harvest hands) were gathered in search for work. They were being promised six to seven rubles per _____. There was also a certain Herr Penner from _____ who took us along to the next village. This man left his Schimmel (horse of light gray or white color) run so fast that we arrived at his home for the noon meal. This Penner asked so many questions about conditions in America. Then after our noon-rest and coffee we accompanied Abraham and Johann Riesen further until we decided to spend the night in a certain village and arrived at Samara the following day at about nine o'clock. Then after the noon meal we made our way to the depot where the train departs at 1:30. We travelled all night.

arriving at four in Pasha? where we had our breakfast and coffee for the second time, which seemed very agreeable to us. Travelling from there we saw many fields of grain, some of it already harvested. Many of these fields had impressed us when we drove through here on our way to our relatives. Many areas also had the most beautiful forest and the meadows were covered with very green grass.

We arrived at Roesk? at eight in the evening. There we had to secure a new billet (ticket or pass) to Moscow. Fortunately we met a German Herr (gentle man) here whom we could ask a number of questions. He said he was Obergaertner (horticulturist) from Hasolansk who had taken his son to a school in Riga. It is always worth a lot to meet some one who can inform us when we need information. But when we arrived in Moscow that Tuesday morning we found out that German man had helped us nothing, since we owned no map by which we could have used his information, which sounded so plausible to us. We took his advice and drove toward a city called Dorna which according to our conception just had to be on the way to Derbelles? but unfortunately since we can not read Russian nor speak Russian we had placed our confidence in this man, we made the mistake of boarding the wrong train, believing it would bring us nearer to the Prussian border. While headed in the wrong direction somebody showed us a map from which we concluded we had boarded the wrong train and were headed ~~not~~ for ~~Petersburg~~ but for ~~Thiensch~~ and ~~Smolensk~~. Thiensch and Smolensk and not for Petersburg.

Now to our dismay the mistake had been made, we had paid for passage to Dorna, so we concluded it might be best to ride to there and from there take the Warsaw train to Dahneburg and Wilnakown in order to arrive at _____ eventually. Yes, such mistakes cost time and money.

Another isolated incident for which the reason seems obscure, was never really divulged to us. After travelling about half the distance our train pulled aside and remained standing until about six in the morning. For us this was a very patience-building experience. A rather outspoken German on the train offered the following explanation. "The czar was planning to visit a number of cities in this general area including _____ and _____ and for the sake of the czar's safety it is deemed necessary that all traffic be halted for a number of hours prior to his use of the railroad tracks. But we could not accept this reason for no other source of information came anywhere near to it. Furthermore many other incidents are known to have happened in this area which made us very apprehensive to travel here only this one time.

A Farewell to the Church in Samara

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

Inasmuch as I have been borne up by the grace of God up to this hour and the time is fast approaching that my travel-colleague and I must prepare to travel to our home, I am overwhelmed by the thought that this will be the last time we will see each other face to face, because we live so far from each other, and because of my approaching old age with its days which do not always please us. So it becomes a logical conclusion that I will not see you dear brother and you dear Sister any more nor you me in this holy place.

That is why it should all the more be my intent at this hour to direct your attention to our eventual meeting on the shores of eternity assured that we all would like to reach that blissful place. To do that requires faith, so I exhort you to continue in this courageous struggle. We do not want to point at others asking, "Will I meet you there on the shores of eternity?" but rather be in earnest to strive for our own salvation, by deploring our own sinful condition and tendency to go astray and rather strive to seek our own salvation with fear and trembling. Or could it be that my poor fellow pilgrim will get there; to the door of eternal salvation and I remain behind and will have to languish eternally.

What a terrible condition would it be, my Beloved, some day to hear the verdict, "You have been weighed and found wanting." Therefore, "Let us accept the blood of Christ, it cleanses us from all blemish, and gives us peace for the time we meet our master. This is for us the time of grace, while heaven's doors are still open, and we must concentrate on the One thing needful." I will not again have the opportunity to proclaim the precious word of God to you, but you have ample provision along this line with brethren who present this gospel to you. So believe what these brethren tell you and be reconciled to God. For God is love and he delights to embrace us on our earthly pilgrimage even if the path leads through thorns and thistles, we cling to our Lord and will not forsake him for it is good to be with him. And he wants all of us to be saved and our faith is the victory that has overcome the world in us and around us.

As a gesture of farewell I want to extend my hand to all of you in parting. Many thanks for the love and friendship which I perceived as I visited among you and in other contexts so may I request that all of you include my travel companions and me in your intercession during our travel to our loved ones. As often as you think of us be concerned that our homeward journey may be a pleasant one so that our dear Saviour, who is the mediator between God and man may accompany us on our dangerous journey and that we might find our loved ones in good health and spirits, i.e. having been kept under the canopy and shadow of the Almighty while we were gone from them. And if there should be someone missing from the circle of loved ones there may that encourage us to consider, "If Christ is our life, then death can only be gain for us, May the Lord grant it through his grace. Amen."

The following excerpts from the travellogue has no beginning
nor end.

After the service many came to bid me farewell; while many promised to come to the home of the Geschwister in the afternoon. Father and Aunt Sukkau already came for the noon meal but after our noon rest many others came. Some one told me there were twenty vehicles here at one time. After the coffee Elder Wiebe held a short message. It was already late when the last vehicle left. For me this occasion was very important inasmuch as I will never meet these dear people again, relatives, fellow ministers of the gospel, and friends and that this parting was forever. And how many expressions of good wishes for our journey, that the grace of God may accompany us. That many of these will consistently intercede for us one dare not doubt.

We did get a little rest during the following night, but we were up at day-break, when the dear brother Johann Riesen was there to take us to Samara. For this journey Brother Sukkau furnished one of the horses and Riesen the other. So at about four in the morning I took leave from the dear ones at this home, and of the three children. It became difficult to look at the faces of dear ones whom you know you will never see again. We just could not speak much it was too painful, (the line on the fold of the paper is undecipherable)

The following paragraph, not necessarily at the right place.

Along the way the Georgianer? were in full bloom, everywhere many flowers in the gardens. The roadsides of the wide avenue there were many Linden and nut trees, as well as, many types of shrubbery. The nut trees were loaded with fruit. In the evening we accompanied our relatives to Orloff where we stayed through Thursday. From there on the 28th of July to Wilhelm Fast, Widow Harder's sister Anna Fast was there to meet us, also Abraham Claassens and several others, also one Bergen. The wife of this home is a daughter of Epps at Augustwalde. These have a son in school in the Molotschna in training-----this one is a son of Jacob Claassens from Mier. From there we drove to Johann Epps, after our noon rest.

It is likely Peter Dyck wrote a "Last Will and Testament before leaving on this trip to Russia. The preamble

Inasmuch as we have disposed of our earthly estate, mindful of the close scrutiny of Almighty God, we want to clasp our hands over this document, and beseech Him to be pronounce his benediction upon the same and be its executor,

Fifthly---- Inasmuch as in the completion of this testament our respective names are conspicuously obvious it is our conclusion that the name of our God must also be attached to the same, for all who love Him, he has promised to bless for a thousand generations. That is why His name must be glorified now, and praised by our descendants, whom I have committed to his loving care that they may be saved also.

He, our God and Saviour has called us to his kingdom of grace, and who because of Christ's blood has supported us to the edge of our graves and thereby brought our lives to their gracious conclusion. That is why every transaction in this time of grave must needs be consummated in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

This we believe and hereby verify with our signatures

Peabody , February 28, 1884

Dear Children:

With praise and thanks we also can come before the Lord at the end of another year for He has brought us hitherto. then also we were permitted to celebrate another Christmas festival which also was intended to bring God glory, inasmuch as we have taken him into our hearts and have taken the One born at Bethlehem as our helper Saviour and redeemer from all our ills and welcome him as such. That he was willing to become the Christmas joy for this whole world makes us glad to have this peace, a clean conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost for such a time as this. May the Lord grant us this and we thank him for it.

First of all we can report that all of our family are well. We had visitors during the holidays. On the fourth Sunday of Advent Bro-in-law Abr.Regier and his wife were with us. The tension which existed for a while with respect to their marriage has cleared up and we are all in a cordial relationship again. It is our hope that as time goes on and some of the (expressed) wishes can be fulfilled the mutual peace which prevailed will again be restored.

I want to also report a few things about our churchly relationship; that we have worship services every 14 days i.e. the second and fourth Sunday in Advent and also on New-Years Day. and when our small group gets together we usually have 30 or more people, counting the many young people who are among us, and some some strangers from Peabody come because our church seems to be the nearest for them (nearest German service?) And so our joy is quite evident when on a Sunday morning the group gathers and Friend Cor. (C.H.) Regier begins the Sunday school with an opening song, speaks a prayer, and expounds the lesson. This session closes with a suitable song. After that closes a churchly song is announced and sung and the formal worship service begins including the sermon and closing hymn, so that we are usually at home by 12 o'clock. This is quite different from our former practice of no Sunday school and we then came home around thirty minutes after one.

But we also have experienced some lack and deprivation until now inasmuch as our Elder L. Suderman does not want to recognize our new church and as yet has not attended any service here. Recently Bro.-in-law Abr.Regier and J.Regier visited him again and asked him to administer Communion to us. He declined to honor this request completely, and that is what I mean when I say we suffer. Our measure of suffering in God's estimation must not be full yet but all things are supposed to work for the good of those who love God.

(the following is not necessarily a continuation)

But when we look back we must say we have also enjoyed many good things in the year just past. A year ago we stood as a chased reer (Reh) that was chased back and forth or as Isaiah speaks of sheep without a shepherd in chapters 13 and 14. This has happened to us but we have also received a shepherd. For when our cup of suffering was full, and the short-sighted human nature held on to flesh as its arm, and we gave evidence of this, but then things changed, the Lord saw our weakness, and made his will known to us and what we considered as hardship was made to serve God's purpose. That the Lord did for us.

Furthermore God has granted our small flock some additional partakers so that our room is more filled and not only that, we also have another preacher of the Word. We see God is with us and he wants to bless us. Our hearts should be attuned to him. We can approach him just as naked and sin-laden as we are.

He accepts us. He does not want to leave us as orphans. He says, "I will come again to you." It is precious to see a flock grow, it is a sign of life and the inner man becomes more alive. There is more hunger and thirst after righteousness as the truths are made plain to us. The young people receive more occasion to proclaim the teaching about salvation and thus are helped to become more active partakers in God's kingdom.

Excerpts pertaining to the L.Suderman Problem

About our church circumstances I can report that we had a worship service every other Sunday last year in our new church, and in the morning before that service there is a Sunday school conducted by Cor. Regier. About 12 children come to receive instruction in Bible History, Biblical Introduction and religion. Over and above that, that dear friend, conducts the German School for eight girls who do not attend the public school. They are Leske (Gerhard) Regier's four daughters, two Bergman daughters, Abraham Regier's Agathe and our Herman's sister, Anna. He, Gegier enjoys the instruction and wants to continue in the future but only for three months in the winter.

Yesterday Elder Ewert and Bro.-in-law Abr. Regier including some of our children were here to discuss some of our church related problems. In the near future there is to be a church dedication in an adjoining congregation and our matter is to be discussed (by some of the Elders present) there. May the Lord grant that all this result in bringing glory to his name.

This discussion took place at a time my wife and I were there last Sunday and at that time I asked him if he would consider serving us communion if we would come to the service at Newton. To this he replied, "Yes, if the Newton folks consent to it!" We followed through on this and so some of us went to Newton in the fall; Mama, the children, and I but none of the others of our group.

Whereupon I promised him (Suderman) that we would not plague him anymore with this matter in the future. This referred to matters we had discussed, which had come to light.

At that time we visited him he suggested that if two men could be chosen as mediators between us they could decide what is to be done and he suggested the Elders Wilhelm Ewert and Christian Krehbiel, to which I consented, but then he deviated saying, "It might just be that they would not decide in the way I view the matter and that is the way things remained."

Prior to the time we were to have our first meeting in the new church I invited him publicly before the whole (Emmaus) church after my sermon and he did not attend our (dedication) service although many others from his church and from other places came. The church was full and for the service I spoke, as well as, Elder Ewert, My Bro.-in-law Bernhard Regier, and several brethren from the Michaliner had come also so that we were quite elated when we began our dedication. I really love our Elder Suderman and I have told him so in many occasions.

You possibly have heard of the election of two additional brethren in the Emmaus church, and the installation of the brethren Gustav Harder and Eduard Claassen was held last Sunday and from our end only J. Regier and our Herman (Janzen) attended. I was sick at the time, but would not have come anyway.

May the Lord endow these two with power from on high that they may become powerful proclaimers of the word of God; that he may anoint them with his Holy Spirit so they can become a blessing to their congregation. May he grant this through his grace.

Father Harder, as far as we know, is well, but has lost a lot of weight and his right hand shakes more so that he can not hold it still, otherwise he is very busy with farm work. He still has his old Andreas, plus another inhabitant by the name of Lettau, who also is from the small Werder, but Syll Mother Harder only has a part-time girl. Presently she has no help.

So far the beginning for this letter can not be found

things are improving with her although she (Mama) still takes a rest at noon regularly, she is improving some. We get a little farther every day just as our German doctor says, "In old age even the best one can expect comes slowly."

And you dear brother-in-law will be observing your birthday soon, and if our best wishes get there belatedly, will you still accept a small congratulation from us? May the dear Lord grant you power from on high for your old age, and be near you with his spirit, so that in the future you might be able to say, "The Lord is with me." and you might be able to praise him as long as you live so that you can take safe steps when those days come when that is difficult. If we cling to our Saviour we lack nothing whether in life or in death. That is my wish for you and all the others in your household for the remainder of your days of grace.

About our brother-in-law Abr. Regier, I can report that he is quite well but Sister-in-law Mienchen (his wife) has been sick longer than Mama, she is still plagued by an illness she had formerly. an ailment of the spleen, which she already had when she was still with you. One day her condition was so bad she could not speak, and had to spit blood. Slowly her speech is returning. Other wise she seems to be happy.

The children (Regier's) have resigned themselves to this situation and the relationship is getting smoother than it was at first. (Abr. Regier Sr. married his young housekeeper.) We are convinced Brother-in-law has a very dependable companion in Mienchen. (Wilhelmine Eichorn)

Our relatives at Newton are well. Brother-in-law is very robust, for instance on last Sunday he conducted two marriages, but he had a substitute preach for him in the morning. One of the weddings was performed right after the church service and the other in the afternoon. Another co-incident is that the two brides are ~~sisters~~ twin sisters, Nickel daughters from the Funk family of Marienburg, formerly from Herpersdorf. And the bridegrooms, young men by now, by the name of Bartel and Goerts are both from Thorn (in Germany) Both of these couples left for Oregon yesterday, where ~~both~~ of them had been before, and ~~have~~ rented some land there, and the other is a carpenter. The beginnings are hard there on young people for products are very expensive but wages are reportedly better there than here. They have to travel by water and by land to get there, and the trip takes eight days. Winters are supposed to be mild there, and the summers moderately warm. They have much rain there in winter and snow is very beneficial for the crops in the summer.

in the winter

Nov. 20, 1883

Nov. 20, 1883 This letter addressed to Beatrice Neb. Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord. Thanks to the grace and mercy of God we arrived at our home and found our loved ones all in good health. We have happy memories of the time we spent in your midst. We want to thank you for all the hospitality and love we experienced among you while there.

Reporting on our homeward journey I state that we arrived at Tecumseh and had to wait there three hours, while at Atchinson we had no spare time, not even to drink a cup of coffee. Leaving there at one o'clock we arrived at Peabody at 7:30, hired a buggy and, did some business yet and arrived at our home at nine. Thus we were home before we were expected for we had planned to come on the evening train but that was very convenient for I could have some time this way to prepare myself for Sunday. But there was something to cause us concern immediately. A young heifer was so constipated that a action had to be taken and the evil was soon eliminated.

For all his goodness we owe our Lord a sincere thankful attitude. We realize we are in his hands and he will lead us according to his good pleasure.

February 4, 1884

Beloved Children:

We greet you in the name of God and the Christ inasmuch as we are concerned about the welfare of our undying souls, in this new year of which over one month is already gone. May the Lord advance you and us all with his spirit to the glory of his name.

Our mother (Mutterchen) has been sick again. Her condition resembles the symptoms she had earlier when her liver was out of order and her condition resembled jaundice in that her color turned yellow. We had that Doctor Loose here, but when he was here yesterday he thought her condition would improve soon. At the time when her birthday was approaching she was concerned that it might be too strenuous for her to have the usual number of guests, so I informed Abraham Entz about her condition with the suggestion that he might inform our friends and relatives to be considerate by not all of them coming on the same day. As a result only the two Geschwister (Abraham Regier Sr. and Bernhard Regier Sr./) and Abraham and Mariechen (Entz) from there (Newton) and those from Gurken (Gerhard Regiers?) and Mother and Bernhard (Harder?)

We have the hope i.e. Mother and I that we will soon show some improvement in our health. I have suffered some time from catarrh and coughing, and the latter is very difficult for me in my routine of conducting a worship service every 14 days. But the Lord will help, and we are confident my mouth will function when that time comes. Your dear letter appeared in ample time before my birthday, and we also acknowledge getting the postcard telling of the passing of dear Julius Harder of Altenau. May the Lord have mercy on his soul.

January 1885

Liebe Geschwister:

Happy and joyful all who seek thee must be all those who enquire about you, who constantly seek your salvation. Yes, blessed be the Lord who has brought us to this hour, who gives us rain and fruitful seasons and fills us with food and joy. We also want to give him the praise that in the realm of the Spirit he has kept us in the faith, has given us his holy Spirit, who gives witness to our spirit that we are the children of God. That is why we are happy and praising our Lord and Saviour as long as we live.

Now dear Ones, it is almost a year now since we received any news from you and according to our knowledge I or one of us did write to you once, so what has happened to you and with us in the meantime? In our family circles nothing has changed except that at Abraham and at Bernhard Regiers a new child has made its appearance, at Abraham Regiers it is a son and at Bernhard Regiers a daughter. But the son of Abraham Regiers is not entirely healthy. He has according to the word of their doctor, an accumulation of water (liquid) in his head and the head is growing out of proportion to the rest of his body, and you can tell by his eyes that something is unnatural. May the Lord be gracious to this child. His parents, instead of the source of joy this child could be he is a source of misgivings, such as, "Will this child mature normally in body and soul, but we know that to those who love the Lord all things must work for good."

And what we lack most in these days is news from abroad, and we are particularly sensitive toward those family members whom we instructed to keep us informed.

No signature.